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The rule of life and love

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R. L. OTTLEY, D.D.

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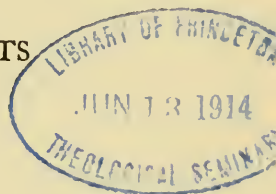
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THE RULE OF LIFE AND LOVE

AN EXPOSITION OF
THE TEN COMMANDMENTS



BY THE REV.

ROBERT LAWRENCE OTTLEY, D.D.

CANON OF CHRIST CHURCH,
HON. FELLOW OF PEMBROKE COLLEGE, OXFORD

Fidelia omnia mandata eius :
confirmata in saeculum saeculi.
—*Ps. cxi. 8.*

Particeps ego sum omnium timentium te :
et cūstodientium mandata tua.
—*Ps. cxix. 63.*

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TO
BISHOP MITCHINSON
MASTER OF PEMBROKE COLLEGE
MY HONOURED TEACHER
AND CONSTANT FRIEND
I DEDICATE THIS BOOK.

PUBLISHER'S NOTE

THE present volume is one of a series of three undertaken by the Rev. Canon Ottley and dealing devotionally with The Creed, The Ten Commandments and The Lord's Prayer. The first work, 'THE RULE OF FAITH AND HOPE,' has already been published, and the third volume will be issued under the title of 'THE RULE OF WORK AND WORSHIP.'

EDITOR'S GENERAL PREFACE

IN no branch of human knowledge has there been a more lively increase of the spirit of research during the past few years than in the study of Theology.

Many points of doctrine have been passing afresh through the crucible; "re-statement" is a popular cry and, in some directions, a real requirement of the age; the additions to our actual materials, both as regards ancient manuscripts and archaeological discoveries, have never before been so great as in recent years; linguistic knowledge has advanced with the fuller possibilities provided by the constant addition of more data for comparative study; cuneiform inscriptions have been deciphered, and forgotten peoples, records, and even tongues, revealed anew as the outcome of diligent, skilful and devoted study.

Scholars have specialized to so great an extent that many conclusions are less speculative than they were, while many more aids are thus available for arriving at a general judgment; and, in some directions at least, the time for drawing such general conclusions, and so making practical use of such specialized research, seems to have come, or to be close at hand.

Many people, therefore, including the large mass of the parochial clergy and students, desire to have in an accessible form a review of the results of this flood of new light on many topics that are of living and vital interest to the Faith; and, at the same time, "practical" questions—by which is really denoted merely the application of faith to life and to the needs of the day—have certainly lost none of their interest, but rather loom larger than ever if the Church is adequately to fulfil her Mission.

It thus seems an appropriate time for the issue of a new series of theological works, which shall aim at presenting a *general survey* of the present position of thought and knowledge in various branches of the wide field which is included in the study of divinity.

The Library of Historic Theology is designed to supply such a series, written by men of known reputation as thinkers and scholars, teachers and divines, who are, one and all, firm upholders of the Faith.

It will not deal merely with doctrinal subjects, though prominence will be given to these; but great importance will be attached also to history—the sure foundation of all progressive knowledge—and even the more strictly doctrinal subjects will be largely dealt with from this point of view, a point of view the value of which in regard to the “practical” subjects is too obvious to need emphasis.

It would be clearly outside the scope of this series to deal with individual books of the Bible or of later Christian writings, with the lives of individuals, or with merely minor (and often highly controversial) points of Church governance, except in so far as these come into the general review of the situation. This detailed study, invaluable as it is, is already abundant in many series of commentaries, texts, biographies, dictionaries and monographs, and would overload far too heavily such a series as the present.

The Editor desires it to be distinctly understood that the various contributors to the series have no responsibility whatsoever for the conclusions or particular views expressed in any volumes other than their own, and that he himself has not felt that it comes within the scope of an editor's work, in a series of this kind, to interfere with the personal views of the writers. He must, therefore, leave to them their full responsibility for their own conclusions.

Shades of opinion and differences of judgment must exist, if thought is not to be at a standstill—petrified into an unproductive fossil; but while neither the Editor nor all their readers can be expected to agree with every point of view in the details of the discussions in all these volumes, he is convinced that the great principles which lie behind every volume are such as must conduce to the strengthening of the Faith and to the glory of God.

That this may be so is the one desire of Editor and contributors alike.

W. C. P.

LONDON, 1911.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

For convenience' sake I give a list of books to which reference is occasionally made and which are scarcely likely to be familiar to ordinary readers:—

Philo, *de decem oraculis*.

Irenaeus, *adv. haereses*.

Origen, *in Exodum hom. viii*.

Augustine, *epist. cxvi. ad Asellicum*.

Hugo de S. Victore, *annotationes elucidatoriae in Exodum*.

T. Aquinas, *summa theologiae*.

Nicolas de Lyra (d. 1340), *comm. in Exodum*.

Ussher, abp. of Armagh (d. 1656), *Exposition of the Decalogue*.

Andrewes, L., bp. of Winchester (d. 1625), *A pattern of catechistical doctrine*.

Grotius, H. (d. 1645), *annotationes ad Exodum c. xx*.

Cocceius, Jo. (d. 1669), *observationes in Exodum c. xx*.

Nicholson, W., bp. of Gloucester (d. 1671), *An exposition of the Catechism of the Church of England*.

Barrow, I., Master of Trin. Coll., Cambridge (d. 1677), *Exposition of the Decalogue*.

Ken, T., bp. of Bath and Wells (d. 1711), *The office of divine love*.

Turretin, F. (d. 1737), *Institutio Theologiae elencticae* (loc. xi. 'De lege Dei').

C. Taylor, *Sayings of the Jewish Fathers, comprising Pirke Aboth* (ed. 2).

Of quite modern works on the Decalogue the late Dr. Dale's book *The Ten Commandments* is perhaps the most noteworthy.

R. L. O.

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The Rule of Life and Love

CHAPTER I

THE RULE OF LIFE AND LOVE

THERE are two sayings of Christ which, taken together, seem to give us the right point of view from which the study of the Decalogue should be approached. The first is that injunction to imitate God which occurs in the Sermon on the Mount, *Ye therefore shall be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.*¹ Man's true life consists in an ever-growing likeness to God: likeness in activity, likeness in character; and since this resemblance depends upon knowledge, and knowledge is impossible without love,² we learn that, for a Christian, life is love. It is love that imparts to man that God-likeness which is the goal of his development.³ The second passage which claims attention is our Lord's reply to the young ruler who asked Him *concerning that which is good*. Christ's answer to the inquiry was, *If thou wouldest enter into life, keep the commandments,*⁴ His meaning being further defined by a reference to the precepts of the second table of the Decalogue.

We are thus led to think of the ten commandments as

¹ Matt. v. 48.

² I John iv. 8.

³ Augustine, *de moribus ecclesiae*, xxiii.: 'Fit per caritatem ut conformemur Deo.'

⁴ Matt. xix. 17.

the divinely given Rule of Life and Love. The end of religion is a certain character, in virtue of which man draws near to God and is enabled to 'walk' with Him. In the Decalogue God sketches, as it were, the main outlines of the life to which He calls man—the life of union or friendship with Himself. By keeping the commandments we enter upon the *path of life*. By keeping the commandments we manifest the reality of our love to God in Christ.¹ It is, in fact, by a resolute dedication of our will to goodness—by aiming at a certain character—that we respond to Christ's invitation, *Follow Me*. His appeal is always directed to man's will, rather than to his intellect or emotion. His benediction rests on them *that hear the word of God, and keep it*. In days when there is a tendency to over-value knowledge and thought, and even to glorify mere impulse, it is well to remind ourselves that righteousness is the end of all God's gifts to man—that on which He has set His heart, that for which He works in providence, that for which He has redeemed the world. The supreme end of religion is the formation of strong and holy character; and the mere fact that the Decalogue holds so prominent a place in the Bible is a challenge to us to inquire whether goodness holds the place it ought to occupy in our aims and endeavours; whether in our religious life we are setting other things—the satisfaction of our intellect, the advancement of our church or even our party, the stirring of our emotions or the soothing of our perplexities—above the one thing needful; above character; above godliness.

I

The Decalogue has had a history concerning which some-

¹ John xiv. 15, 21.

thing will be said in the next chapter. In its present form it obviously contains much more than a mere outline of duty. The moral precepts comprised in it are rooted in certain revealed truths of religion. Accordingly they are to be studied, in the first instance, as a revelation of Almighty God : of His nature, His character, His purpose for mankind.

1. The Decalogue, then, is to be regarded as a Revelation of God. It proclaims what He is, what He loves, what He has wrought for the salvation of man, what He requires of His creatures.

Behind the Decalogue lies the history of the great deliverance of Israel from Egypt. The Exodus was a real intervention of God in human history, in which He manifested His character and His relation to man. Not merely through the spoken word of His accredited messengers and servants, but through *action* He made Himself known to the people of His choice. As a matter of historical fact, He took Him *a nation from the midst of another nation by temptations, by signs, and by wonders, and by war, and by a mighty hand, and by a stretched out arm, and by great terrors.*¹ The Hebrew nation was the living and permanent monument of this divine display of grace and power. Israel was chosen out of the world and separated from the heathen nations that it might hear the voice, and learn the will, of the living God. The history of the deliverance, in fact, impressed upon the ransomed people three great truths of religion : the unity of God as the supreme and incomparable object of worship ; the holiness of God as the Source and Guardian of the moral law ; the redemptive grace of God as a Being in Whom are united infinite power and lovingkindness. These truths are taken for granted in the precepts of the entire law and

¹ Deut. iv. 34.

in the spiritual teaching of the prophets. They are expressly indicated in the preamble to the Decalogue: both in the divine Name which stands in the forefront, *I am Jehovah*, and in the reference to the historical deliverance which formed the foundation-stone of Israel's national history.

The ten commandments, then, are delivered to man by a Being Who has a supreme claim on his fear, his gratitude and his obedience; the obligations which they impose are those befitting a people which has been ransomed from bondage, and lifted by an act of divine grace out of its natural condition into a position of liberty and sonship. The Redeemer Who claims allegiance is also a righteous God. If He condescends to visit man in his helplessness and lowliness, it is that He may raise him into spiritual fellowship with Himself. The call of duty thus comes to us with the force of a personal appeal—the appeal of love. He Who bids us *be holy* for He is *holy* reveals the glory of His character as a motive constraining us to obedience. Each of the first five commandments has a sanction, either prefixed or added to a moral precept, which recalls some aspect of Jehovah's character and work. The first commandment is in form as well as in substance the appeal of the divine Deliverer to the people which He has redeemed and which He calls to holiness. *I am Jehovah thy God, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage*: He to whom thou must ever look for salvation and *grace to help in time of need*. The second 'word' makes mention of the divine 'jealousy'—that fire of outraged love which cannot witness unmoved the rebellion or aversion of those whom Jehovah has borne *on eagles' wings* and has brought unto Himself.¹ The third teaches that Jehovah is a holy God Who will not

¹ Exod. xix. 4.

suffer His *glorious and fearful Name*,¹ His revealed character, to be lightly regarded or dishonoured. The fourth exalts Him as a gracious Being Who has *thoughts of peace* and refreshment for His 'desert-wearied people'; Who leads them gently by the hand of the *shepherds of His flock* to blessedness and rest.² The fifth recalls the divine bounty and goodness which brought the seed of Abraham to their promised country, *which is the glory of all lands*.³ Thus Israel's call to service and obedience is founded on the character of Jehovah. He is not only a God of perfect holiness, but a God of infinite grace, requiring much of His creatures, but giving what He commands. In adopting the Hebrew people and liberating them from servitude, Jehovah was bringing an enslaved and degraded race into a filial relationship to Himself, and the Decalogue is a kind of symbol or sacrament of this change in Israel's *status*. It is calculated by its references to the lovingkindness manifested in the Exodus to deliver men from the temper of servile fear and to train them in the spirit of devotion and love. The disclosure of Jehovah's character appeals directly to the *heart* of man; it touches the springs of action and motive. Thus by the discipline of the law Israel was gradually prepared to receive the great commandment in which the whole law was briefly comprehended: *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart and with all thy soul and with all thy might*.⁴ In the events of the Exodus, then, we see the God of Israel educating His people for the life of divine friendship by manifesting Himself as the supremely worthy object of its love. This self-disclosure, recorded in the

¹ Deut. xxviii. 58.

² See Jer. xxix. 11; Isa. lxiii. 11.

³ Ezek. xx. 6, 15. Cp. Deut. xi. 8-12.

⁴ Deut. vi. 5. Cp. Iren. iv. 16. 3, where God is described as 'praestruens hominem per decalogum in suam amicitiam.'

Decalogue, was, speaking historically, the starting-point of a higher religion.

2. The Decalogue may also be studied in its relation to the Law of Nature, which it presupposes and interprets. Its various precepts embody the leading and primary principles of natural piety, justice and equity. The existence of the Law of Nature is taken for granted in Scripture, and is attested alike by the universal consent of nations and by the consciences of individual men. By early Christian writers this Law is boldly identified with the Decalogue. Irenaeus, for example, declares that in His dealings with the Hebrew people, 'God did at first instruct them by means of those *natural precepts* which from the beginning He had implanted in men, that is to say, by means of the Decalogue; and He required of them nothing beyond this.' 'The patriarchs,' he adds, 'had the righteousness of the Decalogue engraved on their hearts and minds, inasmuch as they loved the God Who made them, and refrained from all injustice to their neighbour.'¹ The essential elements of morality, according to this view, pre-existed in the very constitution of man. The moral law, in its large outlines, was recognized by the light of reason; it was not a matter of express revelation or of social tradition, but was, as St. Paul points out, written in the heart and conscience of God's rational creatures.² In the Decalogue these primary principles and duties, which had been sanctioned and attested by the universal consent of mankind, were re-pub-

¹ Iren. iv. 15. 1; 16. 3. Cp. Tertullian, *adv. Judaeos*, 2: 'Denique ante legem Moysi scriptam in tabulis lapideis, legem fuisse contendo non scriptam, quae naturaliter intelligebatur, et a patribus custodiebatur.' T. Aquinas, *Summa*, i. ii^o. 99. 2 ad 1: 'Sicut gratia praesupponit naturam, ita oportet quod lex divina praesupponat legem naturalem.'

² Rom. i. 19, 20; ii. 14, 15.

lished in a clear and permanent form, to serve as a kind of groundwork upon which human life might be built up anew and developed in accordance with the original purpose of the Creator. The life of friendship or communion with God was that to which all men, as men, were called. Again to quote Irenaeus, 'it was by way of training men beforehand for such a life that the Lord Himself uttered to all mankind alike the words of the Decalogue; and for this reason those precepts remain equally in force amongst us, receiving extension and enlargement, but not annulment, through His advent in the flesh.'¹

The reasons for this solemn re-publication of the Law of Nature are not far to seek. The Hebrews through the influence of their idolatrous surroundings in the land of Egypt, the heathen through continual unfaithfulness to the light of reason, had lost any clear and vital perception of the divine Nature and Will. *Knowing God, the Gentiles glorified Him not as God, neither gave thanks; but became vain in their reasonings, and their senseless heart was darkened.*² Together with the knowledge of God, the apprehension of the law of righteousness gradually became dim and evanescent. In the language of Scripture, *Sin entered into the world,*³ and the consequence of sin was a widespread moral deterioration, which seems in part at least to have been promoted rather than retarded by man's advance in civilization.⁴

¹ Iren. iv. 16. 4.

² Rom. i. 21.

³ Rom. v. 12.

⁴ This is touched upon by Darwin, *Descent of Man*, p. 46. The following passage from the *Discourses* of John Smith, the Cambridge Platonist, well illustrates the point:—

'Reason in man being *Lumen de lumine*, a light flowing from the Fountain and Father of lights, and being, as Tully phraseth it, *participata similitudo rationis aeternae* (as the Law of Nature, the law written in man's heart, is *participatio legis aeternae in rationali creatura*) it was to enable man to work out for himself all those

Here we touch upon facts of universal experience ; facts which form the basis of the whole idea of a divine redemption. The entire movement of which the Bible is the record—the divine movement towards man for his deliverance and renewal—was occasioned by the actual situation in which our race was involved. Accordingly, in an authoritative revelation of the divine will the foundation of the redemptive work was laid. Just as the events of the Exodus manifested the purpose and the character of Israel's Redeemer, so the delivery of the Decalogue lifted once more into prominence that Law of Nature which was in danger of being ignored or forgotten, and vindicated once for all the supreme principle of religion that the moral law is the link that unites God to man, the essential condition for fellowship with Deity.

It is this which gives eternal significance to the ancient story of Israel's redemption. ' God brought the people out of Egypt with power,' writes Irenaeus, ' in order that man ' (not merely Israel, but mankind in general) ' might once more become a disciple and follower of God.' At the same time the Decalogue supplemented the Law of Nature in three ways. It extended the range of morality so as to embrace the region of thought, motive and desire, demanding an

notions of God which are the true ground-work of love and obedience to God and conformity to Him : and in moulding the inward man into the greatest conformity to the Nature of God was the perfection and efficacy of the Religion of Nature. But since man's fall from God, the inward virtue and vigour of reason is much abated ; . . . those principles of divine truth which were first engraven upon man's heart with the finger of God are now, as the characters of some ancient monuments, less clear and legible than at first. And therefore besides the truth of natural inscription God hath provided the truth of divine revelation, which issues forth from His own free will and clearly discovers the way of our return to God, from whom we are fallen.' (*The Excellency and Nobleness of True Religion*, ch. 1.)

inward and voluntary consecration as well as an outward conformity to law. Again, by thus raising indefinitely the standard of moral action, it necessarily kindled in man the sense of shortcoming and the longing for a power that would enable him to satisfy the divine requirement. Lastly it coupled with the requirement of obedience an express declaration of the redemptive love of Israel's Redeemer, pointing, as it were, to Him Who gives the Law as the source of grace to fulfil it.

3. Thirdly, the Decalogue may be regarded as essentially a Law of Love. This is explicitly declared by our Lord in His memorable reply to the question, *Which is the great commandment of the Law?*¹ but it seems to be also suggested by the prefatory words, *I am the Lord thy God*—an expression which makes a direct and personal appeal to man's heart. In substance the Decalogue anticipates the teaching of the new commandment of love. Just as it re-enforces the Law of Nature, so it comprehends all moral duties that are involved in the love of God and of our neighbour. Indeed, since *Love is the fulfilling of the Law*,² the Decalogue in some sense comprehends those special precepts which seem to be added to the Law by Christ. Even the duty which seems most distinctive of the Gospel—the call to deny self, to take up the cross and to follow Christ—is implicitly contained in it, inasmuch as wholehearted love to God includes a perfect willingness to do and to endure whatever love enjoins. We must remember that in speaking of the Law of Love as *the great commandment*, our Lord seems to teach that it is great not merely in respect of the Being Who claims man's obedience, but great also in the illimitable range of its moral content. To love God with all

¹ Matt. xxii. 37-39.

² Rom. xiii. 8-10.

the heart and soul and mind demands the entire consecration of all faculties and all gifts: the regulation in accordance with a single principle of all life and action. As St. Bernard says, 'The limit of love to God is to love Him without limit.' ¹

The appeal of love, *I am the Lord thy God*, is addressed in the first instance to the people of God's especial choice, who (as their own prophets bore witness) were bound by so deep an obligation of gratitude to the service of their Redeemer. But the God of Israel is also the Hope of all nations and the Saviour of the individual soul. The *personal* form of the commandments 'Thou shalt,' 'Thou shalt not,' implies the call not only of all, but of each, into fellowship with the Creator. We find a marked approach towards this individualizing of religion and ethics in the Book of Psalms. Here the national and theocratic point of view tends to disappear and to give way to that of the individual soul. The Psalmist addresses the God of his fathers and of his nation as 'My God.' To him religion consists in a personal relationship of love; it means the discovery that Jehovah cares for the individual soul in its frailty and solitariness; the consciousness that God alone is the satisfying object of the soul's thirst, its refuge, its *portion for ever*. *Whom have I in heaven but Thee, and*

¹ Cp. John Smith, *Discourses*, 'The Excellency and Nobleness of True Religion,' ch. 2 :—'By *self-denial* I mean, the soul's quitting all its own interest in itself, and an entire resignation of itself to Him as to all points of service and duty: and thus the soul loves itself in God, and lives in the possession not so much of its own being as of the Divinity; desiring only to be great in God, to glory in His light, and spread itself in His fulness, to be filled always by Him, and to empty itself again into Him; to receive all from Him, and to expend all for Him: and so to live not as its own, but as God's.'

there is none upon earth that I desire in comparison of Thee ? The very word *Thou* in the Decalogue conveys an individual appeal ; it places all men on a level, and testifies that all alike, whatever be their rank and condition, are dependent on God's bounty and summoned to His service ; ¹ it calls each one into the life of divine friendship, and opens to each the door of moral opportunity.

4. Finally we may study the Decalogue as a Law of Liberty. When it was first delivered to the Hebrew tribes it wore this aspect : it formed a kind of charter of their enfranchisement from the bondage of Egypt. The God Who made known His will and purpose in the moral law was He Who had brought them out of Egypt *with a stretched out arm and with great judgments*. When He laid upon His people the merciful yoke of the law and brought it *into the bond of the covenant*,² He was actually educating men and leading them onwards towards the freedom of the Spirit. The New Testament never allows us to overlook the typical significance of the historic deliverance which welded the loosely organized tribes into a strong nation. The bondage of Egypt was a type of the slavery of sin.³ The redemption of Israel foreshadowed the spiritual deliverance which was destined to be wrought in Christ. The presence of the Holy Spirit in man constitutes *the perfect law of liberty*.⁴ In the school of Jesus Christ man learned once for all that true freedom consists in the harmony of his will with that of God ; that ' freedom ' implies liberty not to sin :⁵ liberty to be and to do all that God

¹ ' Dicit lex σοφ : unitatis numero singulos alloquitur ut ostendat non aliam hic esse viri principis quam minimi de plebe Hebraei conditionem.'—Grotius.

² Ezek. xx. 37. ³ John viii. 34 ; Rom. vi. 6. ⁴ Jas. i. 25.

⁵ Cp. Augustine, *de civ. Dei*, xiv. 11 : ' Arbitrium libertatis tunc est vere liberum cum peccatis non servit.'

wills : to fulfil in the spirit of love that law which is the self-disclosure of love.

II

The foregoing survey of the Decalogue in its different aspects : as a revelation of God, a re-publication of the law of nature, a law of love, a law of liberty, leads us next to consider the principles which ought to guide us in our interpretation of the several commandments and in our application of them to the circumstances of modern life.

1. First, we must ever remember that the *Law is spiritual*.¹ It is a self-disclosure of Him Who is Spirit, and Who is *quick to discern the thoughts and intents of the heart*.² It demands no merely external conformity to rules of conduct, but the submission of the heart and will to the living claim of truth. We should notice that in the Old Testament itself a *spiritual* fulfilment of even ceremonial ordinances is enjoined. The Book of Deuteronomy, for example, expressly declares the moral significance of circumcision. The outward rite is the symbol of an inward and spiritual self-consecration to Jehovah.³ Again, all the precepts that inculcate acts of neighbourly kindness or humanity point beyond the letter of the law to a certain disposition or spirit seeking to imitate the lovingkindness of the divine King of Israel Himself.⁴ Regard is to be had not only to the rights, but also to the necessities, of the widow and the orphan, the poor and the stranger, nor are the claims of the brute creation overlooked. This feature is chiefly characteristic of Deuteronomy, but the Book of Leviticus is by no means wanting in passages of similar

¹ Rom. vii. 14.

² Heb. iv. 12.

³ Deut. x. 16 ; Jer. iv. 4 ; Rom. ii. 28, 29.

⁴ e.g., Exod. xxiii. 6, 5. Cp. Prov. xxv. 21.

purport, culminating in the comprehensive injunction of Leviticus xix. 18, *Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself*. The Old Testament thus itself anticipates that extension of the moral law which is characteristic of the Gospel. The aim and tendency of the law is plainly evident in the spiritual affections which find utterance in the Book of Psalms : that spirit of boundless devotion to God, that entire *delight in His commandments* which is the theme of such Psalms as the cxixth. These embody the very soul and substance of spiritual religion ; they display the matured fruit of that long and severe legal schooling through which Hebrew religion had to pass before it could attain its appropriate climax and crown in the Christian character, in the mind and likeness of Jesus Christ.¹ In Christ was finally manifested the consummation towards which the discipline of the law tended from the first : the self-oblation of a perfectly filial will.²

We are then justified in saying that in the Decalogue was laid the foundation of the religion of the Spirit : that inward devotion to God and to the cause of His kingdom which has its root in 'the great fixed law of moral right, ruling with no reserves over the inner and unseen life.'³ Faith in God putting forth its blossom in the fulfilment of duty and bearing its fruit in the life of love—such is in brief the best idea we can form of a spiritual religion, claiming for God human life in its entirety, and teaching that all

¹ Warde Fowler, *The Religious Experience of the Roman People*, p. 9, observes that Ps. cxix. represents the high-water mark of the religious feeling of the most religious people of antiquity. It is 'a magnificent declaration of conformity to the will of God, i.e., of the desire to be in right relation to Him.'

² Heb. x. 5-10.

³ See Dean Church's beautiful book, *The Discipline of the Christian Character*.

duties are to be done *as unto the Lord*: in dependence on His grace and with an eye only to His will.

2. The Decalogue, then, is to be interpreted spiritually as regulating not only outward conduct and behaviour, but the inner life of thought, feeling and motive.

Another principle of interpretation which appears to be sanctioned by New Testament usage, is that the negative form of the commandments is intended to suggest positive precepts. The evil to be eschewed implies an ideal standard of right to be embraced. Conversely, those precepts which in form are positive (the fourth and fifth) imply prohibitions. This principle seems to be clearly indicated by our Lord in His brief reference to some of the commandments. In the prohibition of murder, not only is the passion of hatred or resentment which leads to it excluded, but the law of active charity even towards enemies is inculcated.

In the same way St. Paul implies that the eighth commandment lays down the principle of Christian generosity or beneficence.¹ Moreover, if the commandments deal with effects, it is to be understood that causes are included: e.g., murder includes all vindictive anger, adultery all inordinate appetites of the flesh, etc. By analogy, in a precept which regulates relationship, other sides of the relationship are included. The fifth commandment, for example, includes duties of parents to children, superiors to inferiors, etc. This may be called the principle of extension or inclusion (*synecdoche*). In fact, the general obligation implied in each single commandment is applicable to all possible relationships of an analogous kind in which man can stand to his fellows, for *Homo homini proximus*.²

¹ Eph. iv. 28.

² Iren. iv. 13. 4. So Cicero, *de officiis*, iii. 6. 27, says it is a 'law of nature' that each man should consult the interests of each.

3. Another principle to be kept steadily in view is that the Decalogue finds its true interpretation not so much in the express teaching of Christ as in His life and actions. In Him the Law is, so to speak, embodied; it is manifested in its full scope and in its applications. The Decalogue is a Law of love and Christ's life is the Life of love. The Decalogue embodies the will of God, and as St. Cyprian says: 'The will of God is that which Christ fulfilled in act and taught in words.'¹ He exhibited that aspect of love to which each commandment points: occasionally indeed in typical actions (as in those special works of mercy which He wrought on the Sabbath day), but continually in the spirit of His whole life. We may think of Him as fulfilling the first and second commandments in His unceasing devotion to God (Matt. iv. 4, 10); the third in the *godly fear* with which He submitted to the Father's will (Heb. v. 7); the fourth in the zeal with which He *went about doing good*; the fifth in His conformity to the Jewish law and in His subjection to earthly parents and rulers;² the sixth in the whole tenor of His life: the life of One Who came *not to destroy men's lives but to save them* (Luke ix. 56, marg.); the seventh in the consecration of His sacred Body to the divine service (Heb. x. 5); the eighth in the unreserved communication of Himself to men—the giving of Himself for the life of the world; the ninth in the steadfastness of His testimony to the truth (John xviii. 37); the tenth in the perfectness of that inward sanctity by which He was ever well-pleasing to the Father.

This principle of interpretation corresponds, of course, to the fact that the true righteousness was exhibited to

¹ *de orat. Dominica*, xv. :† 'Voluntas autem Dei est, quam Christus et fecit et docuit.' See the whole passage.

² See also John viii. 49.

the world not in formal precepts, not in a fixed moral code, but in a human life. The life of Jesus Christ was the perfect commentary upon His teaching. He pointed men to God's Law—*What is written in the Law? How readest thou?*¹ When questioned concerning the way of life He mentions particularly the precepts of the second table, but He supplements His teaching by pointing to Himself, *Follow Me.*² It is only in a personal pattern that we can study the way in which the varied duties involved in different relationships can be actually and harmoniously fulfilled. So that for Christians, the thought of the imitation of Christ tends to overshadow the thought of *keeping the commandments of God*. For in Him we see

‘How love might be, hath been indeed, and is,’

love issuing

‘in loveliness of perfect deeds,
More strong than all poetic thought.’

His comprehensive invitation to His disciples, *Follow Me*, is a call to be what He was, not in the outward circumstances of life, but in spirit and character; a call not merely to obey an abstract law, but to *walk in love*.³

The question whether the Decalogue constitutes an ideally perfect rule of life was a thesis sometimes discussed in the seventeenth century.⁴ Against the Socinians and others who maintained that Christ supplemented (e.g., by His law of self-denial) the moral precepts of the ancient Law, it was argued that the Decalogue was ‘perfect’ if interpreted aright. Christ came to fulfil the Law not in the sense of supplying its defects or correcting its mistakes,

¹ Luke x. 26.

² Mark x. 21.

³ Eph. v. 2.

⁴ See for instance Turretin, *Inst. theol. elenct. loc. xi. quaest. 3*. ‘De perfectione legis moralis.’

but in the sense of exhibiting its essential meaning and spirit in a life. 'Christ,' says Turretin, 'fulfilled the Law not by adding to it or correcting it, but by observing it and carrying it out in act.' The question is one that may be differently answered from different standpoints. It is true that the Decalogue regulates the spirit in which man's relationship to God and to his fellow is to be fulfilled: but it is manifest that the teaching of the Gospel in a sense transforms the character of this relationship. It declares the divine sonship of man in Christ. Henceforth, therefore, the observance of the commandments is of necessity a service of filial love, and the scope and intention of the different precepts is revealed in the life of Him Who is the perfect pattern of sonship.

On the other hand, the Gospel proclaims the real presence and operation of the Holy Spirit; so that the Christian life implies the fulfilment of the ancient law in dependence upon the power of a *new spirit*. It is not the Law which is changed: St. John teaches that *the new commandment* which he writes to the Church is *the old commandment* which it *had from the beginning*.¹ It is the heart of man that is renewed by the gift of the Holy Ghost. Moreover, the Old Testament itself had laid down the broad principle of interpretation which the New Testament applies to the Decalogue. In the love of God, as we have seen, the rule of Christ-like self-denial is included. In the precept *Be ye holy for I am holy*² is implied the imitation of God, Our Lord Himself recognizes the finality and authoritativeness of the Decalogue, simply because its scope and aim is the all-embracing principle of love. 'The new law,' in fact, 'lies concealed in the old as the corn in the ear,

¹ 1 John ii. 7, 8.

² Lev. xi. 44.

as the tree in the seed.' ¹ Consequently Irenaeus is justified in making a statement which at first sight seems paradoxical:

'The commandments pertaining to life in its perfection being one and the same in both Testaments, they manifest one and the same Deity, Who ordained certain precepts adapted to the special needs of a particular time; but the more prominent and important precepts, without which salvation is impossible, were *identical in both*.' ²

III

It will have appeared that the Decalogue, interpreted by the teaching and example of Jesus Christ, finds a permanent place in Christian ethics, not as a mere code of rules, but as defining in outline the relationship of the human soul to God and to all that He has made.

For there are three fundamental questions to which the Gospel, in so far as it contains an ethical system, necessarily gives an answer. In each case the answer seems to be anticipated in the Decalogue.

1. To the question 'What is the chief good?' a response is implied in the first commandment, *I am the Lord thy God: thou shalt have none other gods but Me*. God Himself is the chief good—not (as the Greeks supposed when they spoke in neuter terms of 'the good,' τὸ ἀγαθόν), an abstract state or condition of well-being, but He Who is good (ὁ ἀγαθός) ³: a Person Who can be loved and served; Who can make Himself known and communicate Himself to His creatures; Who is 'good' not with this or that kind of goodness, but 'good' absolutely in His nature and in

¹ Aquinas, *Summa*, i. ii. 107, § 3. ² Iren. iv. 12. 3.

³ Matt. xix. 17.

His gifts ; in the exercise of His power and in the manifestation of His character. All good flows from Him ; the gifts of Nature by which He satisfies the physical needs or *makes glad the heart* of man ; the gifts of imagination, of intellect, of genius, by which the level of human civilization is progressively raised ; the knowledge of that moral law—the law of holiness and truth—which is identical with His own being ; and finally, that power to fulfil the law with alacrity and joy which is the fruit of the divine indwelling. For it is characteristic of the chief good that it imparts itself in response to a fundamental need and instinctive desire of human nature. To ‘ have none other god ’ implies that in God Himself the soul ‘ has ’ all that it needs for the life of blessedness. He is Himself the answer to every prayer and the fulfilment of every heavenward aspiration. For *He is good*. ‘ As the ⁷life of the flesh,’ says Augustine, ‘ is the soul ; so God Himself is the blessed life of the soul.’¹ Man’s thirst for God is his thirst for the chief good : a good which satisfies his highest capacities and noblest instincts : fellowship with a Being in Whom his nature can find satisfaction and rest. It is no mere ‘ thing ’ or ‘ state of being ’ that can be to us all that we need and all that we are capable of becoming ; it is only a Person—a Being Who wills and loves and understands—Who can be to man the goal of his pilgrimage and the home of his spirit.

2. Another fundamental question of ethics : What is

¹ *de civit. Dei*, xix. 26. Elsewhere he speaks of God as the Author of the *vita beata*, ‘ non de his quae condidit, sed de se Ipso (*ib.* x. 18). Cp. *de mor. ecclesiae*, xiii. : ‘ Bonorum summa Deus nobis est ’ ; and Anselm, *Proslogion*, xxv. : ‘ Ama unum bonum in quo sunt omnia bona et sufficit. Desidera simplex bonum, quod est omne bonum, et satis est.’

the standard of right and wrong? The Gospel answers, The holy will of God. We learn that will in nature, in providence, in the moral law, whether implanted in man at his creation or more clearly defined by revelation. But it is in the Person of Christ Himself that the will of God for man is perfectly made known: in what He preached, in what He did, in what He endured.¹ We must remember, further, that though our Lord taught us so much about the ways of God, and though He pointed to Himself as One Who came not to do His own will, but the will of Him that sent Him, yet He sends those who would know and follow the way of life back to the Decalogue—extricating the principles which underlie the several commandments and illustrating them by His own example. In the Decalogue we find the broad outlines of God's will: nor are we allowed to forget that the will of God is not capricious or arbitrary. Moral distinctions do not, as some followers of Duns Scotus seem to have imagined, depend upon the *fiat* of God's will. They are rather the expression of His essential nature and character. The will of God (as in man) does not manifest itself in isolation from the divine reason and the divine love. Personality as we know it in man, and as we are compelled to think of it in God, acts as an undivided whole. The will of God for the perfection of His creatures—that will of which St. Paul speaks absolutely as *the will*, and elsewhere describes more fully as *the good and acceptable and perfect will of God*²—is in itself the law of moral duty: conversely, the Decalogue is rather a gracious manifestation of the divine requirement, than

¹ Tertullian, *de oratione*, 4: 'Est illa voluntas quam Dominus administravit praedicando, operando, sustinendo.' Cp. Cyprian, *de orat. Dom.* xv.

² Rom. ii. 18; xii. 2.

a disciplinary code.¹ Its brief, stern precepts cannot be separated in thought from the merciful Being from Whom they emanate. Only through obedience to them do we fulfil the true law of our nature ; only by keeping the commandments do we respond, as we ought, to the love of God manifested in Jesus Christ.

3. One more ethical question arises : What is the true end of man? We may answer, Life in God and unto God. *Summum bonum*, says Augustine, *est summe esse* ;² and only in union with God does man attain to the life indeed : the life which is freedom, joy, love, likeness to God. Now, as we have already reminded ourselves, our Lord expressly teaches that the way to enter into life is to keep the commandments.³ He came into the world to impart life in more abundant measure, in greater intensity (so to speak), than had been possible before His coming. The Decalogue, then, opens to us the way of life. The heightened energies and capacities of the Christian indwelt by the Spirit of Christ are to be manifested to the full ; but the exercise of them is to be regulated and harmonized by faithful adherence to the rule of life and love given in the commandments. For when we read of *His* (that is, God's) *commandments*,⁴ we are meant to understand that the sum of the moral teaching given at each stage of man's progress is the one commandment of love. Through obedience we prove our love, and through love we enter into fellowship with God. Just as the title Jesus Christ contains a 'compressed Creed' ; so the commandment of love comprises the whole of that moral law which is

¹ Thus in Heb. ii. 2 the Law is called λόγος—'divine utterance' or 'revelation.' See Westcott *ad loc.*

² *de vera relig.* xviii.

³ Matt. xix. 17.

⁴ 1 John iii. 22, 24 ; cp. 23.

explicitly taught in the ten commandments, and which forms the link between the divine and the human.

Enough has been said to indicate the breadth and comprehensiveness of the Decalogue. It is as broad in its range as human life itself; it teaches the right fulfilment of every human relationship; in its aim and spirit it harmonizes with the Gospel itself. For it demands nothing less than the dedication of life to God, in other words 'a life unto God and a death unto self.'¹ The difficulty has sometimes been raised that the Decalogue omits any mention of the duty which a man owes to himself. There is, of course, such a thing as virtuous self-love, and there are moral duties corresponding to it—duties which form the measure of our regard for others. *Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.*² What the Christian is bound to reverence and cherish is not what Scripture calls *the old man*—the unregenerate self—but the *new man*—the nobler or coming self, which is precious in the sight of God and which is destined to be realized, in accordance with His purpose, hereafter. Aquinas, however, already anticipates the answer to this difficulty. 'The love of self,' he says, 'is included in the love of God and of our neighbour; for a man really loves himself aright in so far as he directs his life Godward.'³ Duty to self is implied in the great commandment: duty in its two aspects of self-denial and self-development: for in loving God aright we die to the old self in order that we *may put on the new man which after God hath been created in righteousness and holiness of truth.*⁴

All sin, personal or social, is a wrong done to God, and

¹ Robinson, *The Church Catechism Explained*, p. 75.

² Lev. xix. 18.

³ *Summa theologiae*, i. ii^o. 100. 5. Cp. ii. ii^o. 19. 6.

⁴ Eph. iv. 24. See Additional Note.

is a breach of His commandments. But sin in its essence means self-love: forgetful of God's claim and making self the centre, the aim and the law of life. Consequently we may find a deep significance in the fact that nothing is said in the Decalogue of duty to self. There is no such duty that is not comprised in the precept *Thou shalt have none other gods but me*. In subjection to God man realizes himself, and attains to true life. In the service of God he finds glory, freedom, and peace.¹

ADDITIONAL NOTE ON 'SELF-LOVE'

In the Constitutions of the synod of Lambeth held under Archbishop Peckham, 1281, occurs the following passage, of which a summary is given below: 'Proximum debet quilibet diligere, sicut seipsum. Ubi haec conjunctio *sicut* non dicit aequalitatem, sed conformitatem, ut videlicet diligas proximum tuum *ad quod teipsum*, hoc est, ad bonum non ad malum; et *quomodo* teipsum, hoc est spiritualiter non carnaliter, secundum quod carnalitas dicit vitium. Item *quantum teipsum*, hoc est, in prosperitate et adversitate, sanitate et infirmitate. Item *quantum teipsum respectu temporalium*, pro tanto; ut plus diligas omnem hominem et singulum quam omnem affluentiam temporalium. Item *sicut teipsum* pro tanto, ut plus diligas proximi tui animam, seu animae salutem aeternam, quam tuam vitam propriam temporalem; sicut animae tuae vitam debes vitae tuae carnis praeponere. Item *qualiter teipsum*, ut videlicet omni alii in necessitate subvenias, sicut tibi velles in necessitate consimili subveniri: haec omnia intelliguntur, cum dicitur, *diligas proximum tuum sicut teipsum*.'

['A man ought to love his neighbour, as himself. The qualification "as" implies not equality, but likeness: you should love your neighbour with a view not to his hurt but to his good: you should love him *in the same manner* as you love yourself, i.e., with spiritual not merely carnal affection; and *to the same extent*—i.e., in prosperity and adversity, health and sickness. You should love him as much,

¹ Iren. iv. 14. 1: 'Haec enim gloria hominis, perseverare ac permanere in Dei servitute.' Ibid. iv. 39. 4: 'Subjectio Dei requietio est aeterna.'

as you love yourself in regard to things temporal—loving each and every man more than all temporal abundance ; and “ as ” yourself in the sense that you pay greater heed to the eternal welfare of his soul than to your own bodily life. Moreover, you should love him *in such wise* as you love yourself by giving succour to all others in time of need, just as you would wish in a like case to be succoured yourself. All this is understood when it is said *Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.*’]

CHAPTER II

THE HISTORY OF THE DECALOGUE

THE Decalogue ¹ is familiar to us in two versions: one contained in the Book of Exodus (ch. xx.), the other in Deuteronomy (ch. v.). As we now read the commandments, it is sufficiently clear that they have received some hortatory expansion. In the case of the fourth 'word,' this expansion differs somewhat widely in the two versions; and in certain of the other precepts there are noticeable differences of detail. Briefly stated, the conclusion which Old Testament scholars have reached is that the Decalogue was originally embodied in a very terse and simple form, suitable perhaps for inscription upon tablets of stone, and easily committed to memory. It assumed its present form gradually, by incorporation, as it seems, of elements derived from various sources. The version in Exodus, which is possibly the latest in date, appears to presuppose the teaching of the eighth century prophets, Amos and Hosea; it

¹ The name 'Decalogue' is derived from Deut. x. 4, LXX οἱ δέκα λόγοι (cp. iv. 13, τὰ δέκα ῥήματα), 'the ten words' or 'sayings.' The Latin *decalogus* occurs in Tertullian *de anima*, 37, and in the Latin version of Irenaeus *adv. haereses*. The Greek ἡ δεκάλογος is used by Clement of Alexandria. Philo's treatise bears the title περὶ τῶν δέκα λογίων ('oracles'). As to the critical analysis of the Decalogue, see Driver, *The Literature of the Old Testament*; and the same writer's Commentary on *Exodus* (Camb. Bible), pp. 191, foll. See also Dr. Burn's article, 'Ten Commandments,' in *Murray's Illustrated Bible Dictionary*.

also bears clear traces of the work of the so-called 'Deuteronomic' school and also of the priestly writers who, during the course of the fifth and fourth centuries B.C., compiled an account of Israel's origins and early history to serve as a kind of framework for the legal matter in which they were chiefly interested. What stands out, however, as a crucial and impressive fact is that the Decalogue was prefixed to the entire body of legislation as constituting in its earliest form the root, and in its latest form the flower, of the long spiritual discipline to which Israel was subjected from the period of the Exodus down to that of the return from the captivity in Babylon.

The history, then, of the Decalogue is probably somewhat as follows. There are strong reasons for believing that, in substance at least, this comprehensive outline of moral duty existed in Mosaic times. In the later teachings of prophets and priests its fundamental principles were developed and expanded in accordance with the changing circumstances of Israel's national life. Early in the seventh century¹ a version of the Decalogue was incorporated in the Book of Deuteronomy, which represents an attempt to revive the fundamental principles of the religion of Moses, and of which the most characteristic feature is the predominance of moral over ceremonial elements. Finally, a somewhat different version was assigned a place in the Book of Exodus. The main substance of this version is usually assigned by the critics to the 'Elohistic' writer [E] of the eighth century, whose narrative is incorporated with that of the 'Jehovist' in the Hexateuch. But it shows manifold traces in its

¹ For the view of those who consider that the Book of Deuteronomy is of an earlier date, see Griffiths' *Problem of Deuteronomy*; Naville's *Discovery of the Book of the Law*, and Wiener's *Pentateuchal Studies*, Nos. 14-17, *et passim*, and *Origin of the Pentateuch*, *passim*.

existing form of the influence of other compilers ; and we are justified in thinking that it represents the traditional teaching of a succession of religious leaders, who were agreed in regarding the Decalogue as the foundation-stone, so to speak, of Israel's national life.

In its present position it gives a keynote to the entire legislation ; it indicates the result divinely aimed at from the first ; it establishes the simple yet perfect moral standard which was the ultimate object of that slow and progressive education to which the Hebrew people was subjected. Hence in the Book of Deuteronomy the Decalogue is expressly regarded as the charter of the covenant made at Horeb between Jehovah and His ransomed people.¹

I

The Mosaic origin of the Decalogue, however, is questioned mainly on three grounds.

(1) In the first place it is doubted whether such purely *ethical* precepts are consistent with the usual characteristics of primitive religion. In early times religion was, broadly speaking, 'made up of a series of acts and observances, the correct performance of which was necessary or desirable to secure the favour of the gods or to avert their anger'²; and, as a matter of fact, a very large proportion of the religious ordinances of Israel seem to belong to this stage in human development.

(2) In particular it is urged that the prohibition of images in worship (the second commandment) was practically unknown, or at least remained a dead letter, till the age of

¹ Deut. iv. 13. So in ix. 9, 11, 15 the two tables are called 'the tables of the covenant,' just as the ark is 'the ark of the covenant' (x. 8, etc.).

² W. Robertson Smith, *The Religion of the Semites*, p. 29.

Hosea (c. 740). Images (*pesilim*) were very generally employed, especially in northern and central Israel, down to the middle of the eighth century, and only gave way gradually and partially in response to the preaching of the earlier prophets, by whom they were denounced as characteristic of a formal and external religion which utterly failed to bear fruit in social and personal righteousness.¹

(3) Once more it is contended that the original charter of the Mosaic Covenant may probably have consisted of a group of ten purely ritualistic precepts, namely, those contained in Exodus xxxiv. 14-26 : a passage which appears to be more closely connected than ch. xx. with the account of the delivery of the Law in ch. xix. According to Wellhausen these precepts may have run somewhat as follows :—

1. Thou shalt worship no other god.
2. Thou shalt make thee no molten gods.
3. The feast of unleavened bread shalt thou keep.
4. Every firstling is mine.
5. Thou shalt keep the feast of weeks.
6. Thou shalt keep the feast of ingathering.
7. Thou shalt not offer the blood of my sacrifice with leaven.
8. The fat of my feast shall not be left over until the morning.
9. Thou shalt bring the best of the firstfruits of thy land to the house of Jehovah thy God.
10. Thou shalt not seethe a kid in his mother's milk.

The foregoing table, and indeed the actual substance of the laws comprised in it, is to some extent conjectural, and though precepts of this type may be quite consistent with the general character of primitive religion, there is nothing

¹ See the author's *Religion of Israel*, p. 49.

to prove that this particular group of laws was ever regarded as the charter of the divine covenant with Israel.¹

In reply, then, to the arguments alleged it may be pointed out :—

(1) That it is practically impossible to account for the victory won by Israel over the heathenism of Canaan unless its national religion from the very first contained a strong *ethical* element. The true greatness of Moses—that which constitutes his claim to be honoured as one of the supreme religious leaders of mankind—lay in the fact that he indissolubly linked the idea of righteousness to the idea of God. Only a people trained in some fundamental habits and principles of social morality could have overcome the Canaanites without being absorbed by them. The Book of Judges illustrates the inherent power of resistance to the corrupting influence of heathen surroundings which repeatedly saved Israel's faith in Jehovah and its customary morality from perversion and decay. For while the Decalogue makes a spiritual faith the foundation of all social duty, it is for the most part concerned with the protection of those elementary social rights which are absolutely essential to the existence and cohesion of primitive communities. From this point of view there seems to be nothing in the Decalogue that is inconsistent with the Mosaic age.² On the contrary, it is impossible to explain the exuberant vigour and vitality of the Hebrew race apart from the healthful influence of a

¹ See Driver, *L.O.T.*, pp. 39, 40. He points out that the author, or redactor, of Exod. xxxiv. manifestly identified 'the ten commandments' (verse 28) with the Decalogue of Exod. xx. 1-17.

² Even the tenth commandment, which might be thought to imply an advanced standard of morality, is primarily no more than a plain warning against such greedy desire for another's goods as might, and often did, issue in violent acts. Cp. Amos iii. 10, v. 11; Micah ii. 8, iii. 2-5; Isa. i. 23, iii. 14, 15, etc.

simple and austere moral code, calculated to train a rude and undisciplined race in traditions of faith, purity and valour.¹

(2) With regard to the second commandment in particular it has been pointed out that the prohibition of images was not improbably suggested by the urgent necessity of separating Israel from the *idols of Egypt*, with which it had been brought into such close contact.² Moreover, though it is evident that images were popularly regarded as suitable adjuncts of worship, at least until the eighth century, yet it is not certain that they were universally used, nor does it appear that images existed in connexion either with the sacred Ark or with the central sanctuaries at any period before the division of the kingdom. It has been suggested also that certain of the tribes may possibly have entered Canaan earlier than the Exodus, and that among these tribes, which had not come under the influence of Moses, the use of images was traditional, and only gradually yielded to more spiritual ideas of religion inculcated by the prophets. The whole subject is admittedly obscure, and we seem to be faced by two alternatives: either the prohibition of images formed an original part of the Decalogue which only gradually won its way to observance, or it represents an expansion of the first commandment, suggested by the preaching of the eighth century prophets, who denounced images, as we have seen, mainly because the use of them was closely connected with signal breaches of social righteousness.

(3) The contents of the so-called 'ritual Decalogue' cannot in any case be precisely determined, nor is it clear that it is referred to in any passage of the Pentateuch as

¹ Cp. Driver, *Book of Exodus* (Camb. Bib.), pp. 414-417.

² Cp. Ezek. xx. 7, 8.

‘the ten words.’ Even, however, if such a ‘Decalogue’ existed, it would not alter the significant fact that the moral Decalogue came to overshadow all the rest of the Mosaic legislation, and was always recognized by Israel’s spiritual leaders as embodying what had been Jehovah’s essential requirement from the very beginning of the nation’s existence. When we consider the history of Hebrew religion, we cannot doubt that this simple outline of moral duty, defining religion in terms ‘not of ritual, but of love and service,’ acted continually as a leavening and vitalizing germ in Israel’s religious consciousness. Its national life was rooted in a unique religious experience; it learned in actual fact that Jehovah was a righteous and gracious Being, willing to redeem and mighty to save; and this idea of the Deity was reflected and embodied in the entire Mosaic legislation. As Prof. Robertson Smith has said in a memorable passage:—

‘The Law of Israel does not aim at singularity; it is enough that it is pervaded by a constant sense that the righteous and gracious Jehovah is behind the Law and wields it in conformity with His own holy nature. The Law, therefore, makes no pretence at ideality. It contains precepts adapted, as our Lord puts it, to the hardness of the people’s heart. The ordinances are not abstractly perfect, and fit to be a rule of life in every state of society, but they are fit to make Israel a righteous, humane and God-fearing people, and to facilitate a healthy growth towards better things.’¹ As its spiritual experience grew more mature, Israel learned to recognize that the moral require-

¹ W. R. Smith, *The Old Testament in the Jewish Church*, p. 343. He adds: ‘The important point that reference to Jehovah and His character determines the spirit rather than the details of the legislation cannot be too strongly accentuated.’

ment of Jehovah was simple and all-embracing ; that it corresponded, in fact, to the simplicity of the relationship of love into which He had brought the chosen people. The elaborate ordinance of sacrificial worship was not His first word to Israel. *But this thing commanded He them, saying, Hearken unto My voice and I will be your God and ye shall be My people, and walk ye in all the ways that I command you, that it may be well with you.*¹ Israel was called to the life of righteousness, which is the life of love.

II

We have mentioned some reasons for believing that the entire Decalogue belongs in substance to the age of Moses, but that it has been expanded partly by way of adapting it to the circumstances of a later generation than that of the Exodus,² partly in order to embody certain religious ideas which held a prominent place in the teaching of the prophets. The original form of the commandments has been conjecturally restored as follows :—

1. Thou shalt have none other gods beside Me.
2. Thou shalt not make for thyself any graven image.
3. Thou shalt not take up the name of Jehovah for a vain end (or falsehood).
4. Remember the Sabbath Day to sanctify it.
5. Honour thy father and thy mother.
6. Thou shalt do no murder.
7. Thou shalt not commit adultery.
8. Thou shalt not steal.
9. Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour.
10. Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house.

¹ Jer. vii. 23.

² e.g., the fourth commandment implies the settlement of Israel in Canaan (Exod. xx. 6).

In a general and comprehensive form these precepts laid down principles which are applied to particular instances elsewhere in the Pentateuch, especially in certain passages of the so-called 'Book of the Covenant' (Exod. xx. 20–xxiii. 33).¹ Here it may be pointed out that in the Book of Deuteronomy the covenant of Jehovah with Israel is unquestionably based upon the Decalogue,² whereas in Exodus it seems to be connected either with the group of laws contained in xxxiv. 14–26 (J) or with those included in the 'Book of the Covenant' (E). This divergence constitutes a critical difficulty which it is needless for our present purpose to discuss. It may, however, be maintained with some confidence that the *general tenor* of the Old Testament favours the view which is characteristic of Deuteronomy. The idea of an original covenant 'between' Jehovah and Israel is very deeply rooted in the Old Testament. Broadly speaking, the word 'covenant' implies a bond of mutual obligation between two parties³: Jehovah, on the one hand, pledging Himself by gracious promises of help and salvation, the Hebrew people on its side binding itself to obey certain divinely-imposed commands. According to tradition, such a 'covenant' was actually concluded at Sinai between the God of Israel and His redeemed people (Exod. xxiv.), nor is there any convincing reason to suppose that this mode of conceiving the relationship first originated at a later stage in Israel's history. It seems practically certain that the *idea* of a covenant relationship between Jehovah and the nation was familiar to Israel from the very dawn of its history, whatever may have been the precise

¹ Exod. xxiv. 7 (E). See Driver, *Exodus*, pp. 202, foll.; McNeile, *Exodus*, pp. lxi., lxii.

² See Deut. iv. 13, 23; v. 2, 3; xxix. 1, etc.

³ See McNeile on the history of the word, *Exodus*, pp. 150, foll.

form in which it was represented. Moreover, the relationship was always regarded as involving a moral requirement, Israel being bound not to render a merely formal and outward obedience to certain ceremonial precepts, but to requite its divine Redeemer with devout affections—reverence and fear, gratitude and devotion. Jehovah required of His people a life conformed to His own character; a nobler and higher morality than that of other nations—a morality of which justice, humanity, mercy and good faith were characteristic elements. This was the distinctive feature of the Sinaitic ‘covenant’: this it was that became the standard by which the prophets judged the social and personal life of their contemporaries. *The knowledge of God* mentioned by Hosea¹ may have embraced certain legal, civil and ceremonial usages, but it unquestionably included social righteousness and humanity. Thus, at the very outset of its career as a nation, Israel was subjected to the discipline of a *moral* code, and was never allowed to forget that a special type of character is the essential condition of covenantal union with the holy God. Indeed, the true nature of Israel’s relationship to Jehovah is only to be understood aright by due consideration of the result towards which it tended; and there is no question that the inspired thought of later generations regarded the distinctive vocation of Israel as a call to *holiness*. It was to be a *holy nation*: *holy* as Jehovah is holy.² The epithet ‘holy’ doubtless was applicable to the nation from the first, but its full significance could only be perceived as the result of a prolonged and varied discipline. Jewish faith at length recognized that the nation was ‘holy,’ not only as being ‘separated’ from the pollutions of heathendom, but as being called to exhibit in life

¹ Hosea vi. 6.

² Exod. xix. 6; Lev. xi. 45.

and character the spiritual perfections of its divine Redeemer.¹

It will have appeared that the real significance of the prominence assigned to the Decalogue in the Mosaic legislation can only be estimated aright when we take into account the whole tendency of Israel's history. The course of events made it manifest that Israel was called to be the people of revelation—the people whose thirst for the living God, whose passion for a righteousness which He could accept and crown, qualified it to become *a light of the Gentiles*, a prophet and missionary to mankind at large.

III

The inward and spiritual significance of the Decalogue was finally made manifest in the life and in the teaching of Christ. But it may be well to briefly describe its purport as first delivered to the Israelites. This is very briefly done by Josephus,² but perhaps without sufficient regard to the historical circumstances under which the covenant between God and Israel was originally established. The first four 'words' seem to regulate those duties which resulted from Israel's new relationship to its Deliverer. The first word is a warning against polytheism. Israel is to be faithful and loyal to Jehovah, and to regard Him for all purposes of worship as the one and only God. This was the fundamental principle of Hebrew religion, marking its separation both from the fantastic idolatry of Egypt and from the varied forms of nature-worship with which it was destined to be confronted in Canaan. The second word directs that the worship paid to God shall be in accordance with His revealed nature: images of Jehovah were forbidden because

¹ Cp. 1 Pet. ii. 9.

² *Antiq.* iii. 5. 5.

the primary lesson that Israel needed was that no material symbol could adequately represent a spiritual Being. The third word teaches the holiness of God as manifested in the events of the Exodus. His Name, that is, the expression of His character, is to be held in honour and not to be employed lightly, falsely, or without just occasion. The fourth word, by its injunction to 'remember,' seems to indicate that the observance of the seventh day was already traditional among the Semitic peoples. The command to 'sanctify' the day consecrates an ancient tribal custom as a symbol of Jehovah's covenant-union with Israel; at the same time the fourth word lays the foundation of all the Mosaic ordinances of sacred worship. The fifth word may be regarded as closing the first table by enjoining proper deference to parents. Its position implies that parental authority is a counterpart of divine.¹ In later legislation we find an extension of the commandment to what may be called spiritual parentage.² The whole social order, in fact, is based on the regulation of family life, and even the institutions of government are thus invested with a sacrosanct character.

The second table deals with social duties, and gives them a religious sanction. The sixth word enjoins respect for life, the seventh for the marriage bond, the eighth for the property of others. The ninth word inculcates not so much the duty of truthfulness in general as that of abstinence from any false oath in a court of law or elsewhere which might involve detriment to another's character, property or life. The concluding word embodies a principle which

¹ Cp. Aristotle, *Eth. Nic.* ix. 2. 8: 'One ought also to render honour to one's parents, exactly as one renders honour to the Gods,' etc.

² Cp. Lev. xix. 32; Exod. xxii. 28.

was to be more clearly enunciated in the New Testament. Apparently the original precept ended at 'house'—the rest being a later expansion. It has been already noticed that 'desire' is here restrained in view of the close connexion between lawless impulse and violent or oppressive deeds. The commandment is thus not inconsistent with a very primitive stage of moral and social development.

Such was the simple code of morality which was destined to be such a potent factor in the future development of the Hebrew people, training it gradually to recognize the unique greatness of its special calling, and the nature and character of its divine Deliverer. The legislation looked to the future; it was adapted to the capacities of a rude and untutored race of men; it accommodated itself to the hardness of their hearts; it was designed to fit them by slow degrees for a religion of the spirit, leading them onward, as Irenaeus says, 'through things secondary to things primary, through things typical to things real, through things temporal, carnal and earthly to things eternal, spiritual and heavenly.'¹

There are three features in the Decalogue which rendered it the suitable foundation of this progressive education. In the first place it connects all personal morality and social duty or right with religion. As we have seen, the appeal of love lies behind the command to obey. He Who demands the exclusive homage of Israel is the holy Being Who has already manifested His compassion for the oppressed, and His power to redeem. Next, the prohibitory form of the Decalogue harmonizes with its pedagogic function as part of a primary course of ethical instruction. The will of God, in the very process of educating that of man, necessarily comes into collision with his natural propensity to evil.

¹ *Adv. haer.* iv. 14. 3.

Moral education must begin with the restriction of undisciplined desire. Thus the negative form of the commandments seems to presuppose the Fall of Man, the fact of universal sinfulness. There is obvious truth in Augustine's contention that the Old Testament differs from the New in that the one inculcates fear, the other love.¹ At the same time we must not forget that even within the limits of the Old Testament it is plainly taught that the essential spirit of religion is love. In such books as Deuteronomy we are brought to the very threshold of the Gospel.² The whole requirement of Jehovah is summed up in the simple and positive precept, *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might.*

Another striking feature of the Decalogue is the absence of any directions bearing on worship. The only ceremonial requirement is the due recognition of the holiness of the seventh day. The prophets seem to corroborate this essential characteristic of the Mosaic teaching: first, in their silence as to matters of ritual observance; secondly, in their insistence on social righteousness as the essential element in Jehovah's religion. It is manifest—even apart from explicit statements like that of Jeremiah vii. 22—that the Mosaic *Torah* ('direction' or 'instruction') was not concerned primarily with matters of worship, but with points of moral and social duty. The ethical teaching of the Decalogue lay behind the elaborate development and codification of the ceremonial law, which in the main undoubtedly belonged to a period subsequent to the age of prophets. To the priority and supremacy of the moral as

¹ Aug. *c. Adimant. Manich. discip.*, i. 17.

² Hence Jerome speaks of this book as 'evangelicae legis prae-figuratio' (*ep. ad Paulinum*, 9). See Deut. vi. 5, etc.

compared with the ceremonial law we may also attribute the fact that the positive ordinances of Hebrew religion gradually came to be regarded as moral symbols, expressive of Israel's spiritual *status* and vocation ; as emblems of the holiness that became a kingdom of priests. To the rite of circumcision, for instance, a spiritual significance came to be attached ; it is regarded (in Deuteronomy and elsewhere) as the outward token of a heart converted and purified by divine grace.¹ So again, the ordinance of the Passover symbolized the sacerdotal *status* of the nation, while the sanctification of the firstborn represented the vocation of the entire people to Jehovah's special service. In these and in other instances we see the effect of the fundamental moral ideas involved in Israel's covenant relationship to God. Even the outward observances of religion were visible tokens and effectual signs of the spiritual privileges and responsibilities of those whom Jehovah deigned to call into fellowship with Himself.

IV

The Decalogue was originally delivered to a rude horde of escaped slaves as a sequel to their deliverance from Egypt and as a token of their separation from all false notions of deity, and from all the moral pollution which their long sojourn in a heathen land had made familiar to them. But the very fact that it so closely connected moral duty with vital truths of religion, and that its various precepts were so free from local or tribal peculiarities, imparted to the Decalogue the character and force of an everlasting and universal covenant.

¹ See Deut. x. 16 ; xxx. 6. Cp. Jer. iv. 4 ; ix. 26 ; and Rom. ii. 28, 29.

Hence the ten commandments retain their unique authority for the human conscience even in the most enlightened peoples and in periods far removed in time and in circumstances from that of the Exodus. 'The voice that spoke from Sinai reverberates in all lands'¹; for it finds an echo in the 'general heart of men'; its utterance is that of the Law of Nature and Reason itself.²

This was early recognized by Christian writers. Both Justin and Irenaeus emphatically assert the permanent obligation of the moral precepts contained in the Decalogue; Tertullian and Augustine regard it as embodying the Law of Nature; and this view becomes a commonplace with the great scholastic teachers, e.g., Thomas Aquinas and Duns Scotus, and with theologians of the Reformed Church in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The question of the eternal obligation of the Decalogue became a matter of dispute between the adherents of Luther and Calvin; the Socinians maintained that even the Decalogue was abrogated by the Law of Christ, and this was also the opinion of the eighteenth century rationalists.³ But speaking generally, Christian teachers and commentators have devoted themselves to interpreting the immutable principles of the Decalogue in the light of Christ's own teaching. As regards the usage of the English Church, it seems to be true that from the earliest times care was taken to enforce upon the clergy the duty of teaching the rudiments of the faith, and expounding the Creed, the Lord's Prayer, and the Ten Commandments in the vulgar tongue. 'Hence is it,' writes

¹ Maclaren, *Exposition of the Book of Exodus*, p. 98.

² See above, p. 6.

³ Special mention may be made of the work of J. D. Michaelis (1717-1791), who in his *Commentaries on the Laws of Moses* deals with the entire Mosaic Law as a civil rather than a moral code.

Mr. Maskell, 'that we have still remaining in manuscript so many short expositions in English of the Creed and the Lord's Prayer and the Ten Commandments.'¹ These elements of instruction were gradually incorporated in the Prymer,² which at an earlier period included only prayers and devotions, but which in the fifteenth century contained the Decalogue and the Creed in English. That these were already in some measure familiar to the common people was mainly attributable to the pastoral zeal of prelates like Peckham, Archbishop of Canterbury, who in his Constitutions of Lambeth, 1281, enjoins 'that every priest who presides over a people do four times in the year, that is once a quarter, on some one or more solemn days, by himself or by some other, expound to the people in the vulgar tongue, without any fantastical affectation of subtilty (*sine exquisita verborum subtilitate*), the fourteen articles of faith, the ten commandments of the Decalogue, the two precepts of the Gospel or of love to God and man, the seven works of mercy, the seven capital sins with their progeny, the seven principal virtues, and the seven sacraments of grace.'³ This injunction is followed by a very brief summary of the teaching contained in these different formularies. As to the Decalogue, Peckham follows the current (Augustinian) method of division, and states that three of the precepts 'respect God and are called Commandments of the first table, seven respect man, and are called those of the second table.' A similar constitution of the Archbishop (Thoresby) of York

¹ *Monumenta Ritualia Ecclesiae Anglicanae*, vol. 2, p. xlvii.

² On the history of the Prymer see Maskell, vol. 2; Procter and Frere, *A New History of the Book of Common Prayer*, pp. 19, 20, etc.; C. Wordsworth, *The Old Service Books of the English Church*, ch. ix.

³ In J. Johnson, *A Collection of all the Ecclesiastical Laws*, etc., vol. ii.; 'Const. of Lambeth,' can. ix.

(d. 1373) exhorts the laity 'to hear God's service every Sunday and to hear God's law taught in the mother tongue.' In his anxiety to raise the general level of zeal and knowledge, both among clergy and laity, the same great prelate wrote an 'Instruction' or Catechism for the people, which was published in English and Latin versions, and was afterwards issued in an adapted form, apparently by Wycliffe himself. Thoresby's *Lay Folk's Catechism*, as it is sometimes called, includes expositions of the Lord's Prayer, the Creed and the Ten Commandments. The English version was in rude and simple verse, so as to be easily understood even by the most uncultured folk. It seems that Thoresby's action was dictated, partly by his own pastoral zeal, partly by the example of Peckham in the southern province some seventy-six years before. He secured for his catechism the approval of the Convocation of York; and he demanded of the clergy a higher standard of activity than Peckham had required, enjoining them to instruct the people not only 'four times a year on one or more holy days,' but 'at least on the Lord's Day.'¹

Nearly two centuries later we find an injunction of Archbishop Lee requiring parish priests to teach their parishioners the Lord's Prayer and the *Ave* in English 'at Mattens time, and betwene Mattens and Laudes'; the Creed after the recital of the Creed at Mass, and the Ten Commandments between Evensong and Compline on holy days.² But it is important to remember that such teaching had been customary, though it occasionally fell into disuse, from the

¹ *The Lay Folks' Catechism* (Latin and English Versions of Abp. Thoresby's instruction) is published in the 'Early English Text Society's' series, No. 118, with introduction, glossary, etc., by the late Canon Simmons and Canon Nolloth (London, 1901).

² C. Wordsworth, *op. cit.*, 285, 286.

seventh century onwards¹; and in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries children were commonly instructed in these rudiments of faith and morals.

V

According to the ancient Hebrew tradition the two tables of the 'testimony'—that is the declaration of God's will contained in the ten words—were deposited and preserved in the ark of the covenant.² This implies that the most sacred of Israel's possessions, enshrined in the most venerated of religious objects, and withdrawn from view in the holiest part of the tabernacle, was the Decalogue. This circumstance may be regarded as an ample justification of the position assigned to it in the English Liturgy. Its introduction into the service in the Prayer Book of 1552 was a novelty, but it was a step which may be defended on several grounds. In the first place, as we have seen, the Decalogue must have been tolerably familiar to ordinary worshippers.³ It had been customary to recite and to expound it in the hearing of the people at least once every quarter since the thirteenth century; and the second table was read in the Mass as the Epistle for the Wednesday before Mid-Lent Sunday. Further, a precedent was furnished by the 'Liturgy of Strasburg,' a Latin version of which was published in London by Valerand Pullain (1551) with a dedication to Edward VI.⁴ In this liturgy the Sunday service

¹ C. Wordsworth, *op. cit.*, 285, 286.

² Exod. xxv. 16, 21; xl. 20. Cp. Deut. x. 2.

³ Freeman, *Principles of Divine Service*, vol. 2, ch. iv., p. 440, observes that 'an appeal to the Decalogue was a customary form of oath in the ancient British Church: which indicates perhaps a eucharistic use of it.'

⁴ Procter and Frere, *New History*, etc., additional note, pp. 86 foll.

began with the recitation of the Decalogue, which was followed by the ensuing collect: 'Lord God, merciful Father, Who in this Decalogue hast taught us by Thy servant Moses the righteousness of Thy Law; deign so to write it by Thy Spirit in our hearts that henceforth we may will and desire nothing more than to please Thee in all things by a most perfect obedience, through Jesus Christ our Lord.' It would seem, moreover, that since 1547, in pursuance of one of the Edwardine *Injunctions*, the Decalogue together with the Creed and the Lord's Prayer had occasionally been recited in English immediately after the Gospel.¹ It was only a comparatively slight change, therefore, that was made in the Book of 1552. At the same time the ninefold *Kyrie Eleison*, which as a very ancient feature of the service had been retained in the Book of 1549 by way of an introduction to the Mass, was adapted in such a way as to provide a penitential response to the several commandments, the tenth being partly based upon the collect in the Strasburg Liturgy.²

The introduction of the Decalogue was probably intended by the revisers of 1552 to be a rule or standard of self-examination before communion. The first act of Edward VI's first parliament was directed against 'revilers' of the Blessed Sacrament—persons who 'contemptuously depraved, despised or reviled the same,' 'disputed and reasoned unreverently and ungodly of that most holy mystery'³;

¹ The Injunction recurs in the Injunctions of Elizabeth, No v.: 'Item, that every holy day through the year, when they have no sermon, they [the clergy specified] shall immediately after the Gospel openly and plainly recite to their parishioners in the pulpit the Paternoster, the Creed and the Ten Commandments, in English, to the intent that the people may learn the same by heart,' etc. See Gee and Hardy, *Documents Illustrative of the History of the English Church*, p. 420.

² See Luckock, *The Divine Liturgy*, p. 79.

³ Gee and Hardy, pp. 322 foll.

and there is no doubt that some attempt to guard the Sacrament from profane or careless participation was timely and necessary. In the Scottish Liturgy of 1637 the people were directed to ask God's mercy after the reading of each commandment 'for their transgression of every duty therein, either according to the letter, or to the mystical importance of the said commandments.' The expansion, then, of the penitential preparation for devout reception of the Eucharist was suggested by a good motive, and was in itself desirable. Incidentally, however, the insertion of the Decalogue was liturgically valuable as reviving the ancient lection from the Law which had been customary in the early church, and which was retained in various Eastern liturgies.¹ A lection from other portions of the Old Testament was also an original feature of the Gallican and Roman liturgies, and is still retained on certain days in the Roman Church.² The Decalogue may thus be regarded as an invariable lection from the Old Testament, and forms a very interesting and distinctive feature of our service, which could not be discarded without a real loss.³ The Nonjurors, in compiling their liturgy, adopted in its

¹ *Apostolic Constitutions*, viii. 5: μετὰ τὴν ἀνάγνωσιν τοῦ νόμου. For an example of later use see the Liturgy of the Syrian Jacobites (in Brightman, *Liturgies East and West*, pp. 77 foll.). The Armenian and Nestorian Liturgies retain lections from the Old Testament. That the reading of the Decalogue was intended to rank with the Epistle and Gospel may be gathered from the direction: 'Then shall the priest, turning to the people, rehearse distinctly all the ten commandments' (added in 1661 at Bp. Wren's suggestion).

² Pullan, *Hist. of the Book of Common Prayer*, notes that 'the so-called Ambrosian service of Milan also retains this [Old Testament] lection' (p. 23).

³ Other instances of such invariable lections are given by Luckock, *Div. Liturgy*, p. 78. The use of the *Kyrie* as a 'respond' is also liturgically not without precedent.

place the Gospel summary of the commandments (St. Matt. xxii. 37-40), and the use of this as an *alternative* is permitted in the present Scottish office; as an *addition*, in the American office. It has been recently suggested that the Ten commandments should be omitted, provided they be said once on each Sunday and Holy Day; the Gospel summary being rehearsed in case of such omission.

We may close this brief survey of the place assigned to the Decalogue in Christian thought and worship by pointing out the value of this fundamental moral code as an enduring link between Jew and Christian. The central truth of Judaism is the intimate connexion of morality with religion. 'In every stage of its development,' writes a Jewish teacher, 'Judaism has taught that faith and ritual are but the paths to righteousness, and that far higher than obedience to the ceremonial law, higher even than the possession of theological truth, is purity of heart and holiness of life'¹; and, as Israel has never, in spite of the many vicissitudes of its history, altogether forgotten its original vocation to be a *holy nation*, we are not surprised to find that its representative thinkers and teachers have continually insisted on the fundamental nature and authority of the Decalogue. Nor can it be denied that the ethics of Judaism, at their highest and purest, are closely akin to those of Christianity. There is something of the same zeal for active lovingkindness, and inward purity of thought and motive; the same spirit of devotion, joy in God, and delight in His will. This high standard of goodness is welcome for its own sake, though as yet the Jew is in a real sense self-estranged from Christ and blind to the meaning of His mission and to the power of His

¹ The Rev. M. Joseph, 'Jewish Ethics' in *Religious Systems of the World* (Sonnenschein).

Spirit. The following sentence will fittingly close the present section, and will perhaps recall its opening sentences : 'The root of knowledge was placed in the Ark, which is like the innermost chamber of the heart ; and this [root] was the Ten Words and their derivatives ; that is the *Torah*.' ¹

VI

One more point in connexion with the history of the Decalogue may be considered here, namely, the question as to the most suitable arrangement of the ten commandments.

Speaking broadly, three different schemes of division have been adopted.

1. Among the Jews it has been the traditional view that the preface to the Decalogue (Exod. xx. 2) constitutes the first commandment, which is in effect an injunction to believe in the personality and moral perfection of God. *I am Jehovah thy God which brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.* The second word (Exod. xx. 3-6) is a command to believe in the unity and spirituality of the Deity. Apparently this tradition is not very ancient, as it seems to be unknown to Philo or Josephus. It has been suggested that it was probably dictated by a spirit of antagonism to Christianity.² The most weighty objection to it is that it treats what is properly a doctrine of faith as if it were a moral precept.³

¹ Judah ha-Levi, the Spanish philosopher and Hebrew poet (c. 1085-1140). See *The Jewish Encyclopædia*, vol. 4, s.v. 'Decalogue, the, in Jewish theology.' See Additional Note.

² Oehler, *Old Testament Theology*, § 85.

³ Nic. de Lyra says that the Jews distinguish two commandments in the first word (1) the preface (Exod. xx. 2) enjoins '*affirmative* quod ille habeatur pro vero Deo qui eduxit filios Israel de

2. Philo adopts a more natural arrangement of the Commandments, when he divides them into two pentads: the first containing the precepts of 'piety,' the second the precepts of 'probity.' The first table, he says, is concerned with that sole rule of God (*monarchia*) by which the world is governed. Consequently, if duty to God is the beginning, duty to parents is the fitting conclusion of the pentad, since they are the visible representatives of God on earth. Philo further points out that all the remaining precepts resemble each other, and differ from the fifth, in being prohibitive ('Thou shalt not').

There is much to be said for this arrangement, which has in fact been virtually adopted by the Fathers of the first four centuries and by the Eastern Church generally. It is pointed out that only the first five commandments are enforced by reasons or sanctions. On the other hand, it should be noticed that the fifth commandment is co-ordinated with those of the second table in St. Matt. xix. 18, 19 (and parallel passages). The truth is that this precept stands on the confines of both tables, since parentage (as Philo observes) constitutes a kind of link between the divine and the human, and implies a claim on the offspring which is necessarily akin to that of the Creator Himself.¹ This arrangement has found favour with several modern Protestant writers.²

Aegypto in tot signis mirabilibus; (2) *Non habebis deos alienos*, etc., in quo prohibetur *negative* ne cultus latriae alteri impendatur.'

¹ Cp. Grotius' comment: 'Proximi Deo sunt parentes et veluti in terris dii quidam quorum ministerio Deus usus est ut nos in pulcherrimum templum suum introduceret.' So Nicholas de Lyra: 'Sicut Deus est principium omnium, ita parentes habent rationem principii respectu filiorum.'

² e.g., Schultz, *Old Testament Theology*, ii. 47, Geffken, and others,

3. Augustine discusses the most suitable method of arranging the commandments in his *Quaestiones in Exodum*.¹ The system he proposes is that which has been traditional in the Roman and Lutheran churches. According to his arrangement, the first and second words form a single precept, so that there are *three* which relate to the duty that man owes to God; the tenth is divided into two precepts, the ninth 'Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife'; and the tenth 'Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house,' etc. Thus, as he believes, there are seven words which prescribe man's duty to his neighbour.

This division, though very widely accepted, seems to be based on *à priori* considerations. 'To me,' writes Augustine, 'it seems more fitting (*congruentius*) to regard the commandments as three and seven, inasmuch as the former which relate to God, seem on careful consideration to suggest a reference to the Trinity.' This is stated more dogmatically and with further reasons alleged by St. Thomas Aquinas, in his brief but exhaustive inquiry into the subject,² but he frankly bases his contention on Augustine's authority. As regards the division of the last precept into two, it should be noticed that such an arrangement is suggested by the text of the precept in Deuteronomy v., where the mention of the 'wife' precedes that of the 'house' and other property, a different verb being employed for 'desire' or 'covet' in each case.³ This is thought by Augustine and Aquinas to imply the prohibition

¹ Lib. ii., quaest. 71.

² *Summa Theologiae*, i. ii^{ae}. 100. 4.

³ The use of different verbs is thought by Dr. Driver to be merely a rhetorical variation, and to have no special significance. The order in Exodus ('house,' 'wife,' 'servant,' 'ox') is well illustrated by a line in Hesiod, *Opera*, 403: οἶκον μὲν πρότιστα, γυναῖκά τε, βοῦν τ' ἄπο ἥρα (Grotius, *ad loc.*).

of two different forms of desire, corresponding to two distinct kinds of good (*bonum delectabile, bonum utile*); but the parallel passage in Exodus does not in any way favour and rather seems to contradict such a supposition. Indeed, it seems almost certain that the original precept ended with the word 'house,' the examples of property which follow being a later expansion. Finally, in St. Mark x. 19, and Romans xiii. 9, the tenth word is treated as a single precept.

The question relating to the exact mode of dividing the commandments is not of any great importance. There is some significance in the fact that Jews and Christians alike all agree in enumerating *ten* commandments. Many mystical writers have dwelt on the symbolism of this number—its fitness to denote perfection or completeness—the *whole duty of man* being comprised in the Decalogue. In any case the number ten is of frequent occurrence in the Pentateuch, perhaps as having practical convenience for mnemonic purposes; but not improbably it was regarded as sacred, like three, seven and twelve, which were also commonly connected with religious objects and conceptions.¹

¹ See the article 'Number' by Prof. König in Hastings' *Dict. of the Bible*, vol. 3.

ADDITIONAL NOTE (p. 47).

According to a Rabbinic tradition the entire Decalogue is included in the *Shema* ('Hear, O Israel, etc.), which was commonly believed to embrace three passages: Deut. vi. 4-9; xi. 13-21; Num. xv. 37-41. See this worked out in detail in Taylor, *Sayings*, etc., pp. 116-119.

THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

I

‘I am the Lord thy God, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. Thou shalt have none other gods before Me.’

CHAPTER III

THE FIRST COMMANDMENT

THE solemn preface to the Decalogue lays down the principle that the moral life is rooted in the fear and love of God; that conscience, bearing witness to a law written in the heart of man, is His voice; that His claim extends to every sphere of human life and activity. *All these words* that follow, covering the whole field of duty, are spoken by the mouth of the Most High. Other precepts, religious, civil and ceremonial are delivered to Israel by Moses. Those which concern man as man are uttered by God Himself.

The idea of good, then, is revealed or communicated to man by his Creator. *He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good.*¹ The claim of righteousness is the personal claim of God Himself upon His reasonable creatures. Accordingly, the preface to the Decalogue proclaims the doctrine of God in such plain and simple form as Israel, in its rudimentary and barbarous condition, could apprehend. *I am Jehovah thy God.* Religion and morality are inseparably combined in the knowledge of God. Israel's deliverance from Egypt was the starting-point not only of a purer and more spiritual faith, but of a higher morality than the world had yet known. In the Decalogue, therefore, we find a

¹ Micah vi. 8.

blending of moral precepts with doctrinal instruction. In revealing His mind and will for man, God discloses something also of His Nature and Personality; and thus the fundamental principle is asserted that righteousness is the necessary condition of spiritual enlightenment. For centuries, as we have seen, the Jewish people has regarded the preface to the first 'word' as constituting in itself a commandment,¹ thus bearing unconscious witness to the principle that the true law of man's life is the revealed character of God, and that likeness to God is the goal of his moral development.

I

We may briefly review the doctrinal truths which form the foundation of the *great and first* commandment.

1. There is, first, the mystery of the divine personality: *I am Jehovah*. This is the master-truth which is impressed on Israel by the entire method and spirit of the divine self-revelation. The Old Testament contains no trace of abstract or metaphysical conceptions of Deity. It is throughout the record of the personal action and self-communication of a living Being, calling man into a personal relationship with Himself. The frequent use of anthropomorphic expressions—the ascription to Jehovah of love and hatred, wrath and jealousy, scorn and even repentance—tended to impress upon the Hebrew mind, perhaps in the only possible way, the basal truth of catholic religion, namely that the Creator and Ruler of the universe is akin to man in the essential characteristics of His being: He wills, He loves, He thinks, He speaks, He appeals. He is free to carry out His purposes of judgment or of grace.

¹ See above, p. 47, and cp. Taylor, *Sayings of the Jewish Fathers*, pp. 108 foll.

He is utterly distinct from the course of physical nature, which He transcends and controls. Thus, since man is made in His image, morality consists in the fulfilment of personal relationships.¹ God is, in other words, the centre of a realm of personalities, destined to find and to fulfil in communion and intercourse with Himself the law of their creaturely perfection. It may be questioned, indeed, whether such a term as 'the Absolute' has any religious value or any moral significance whatever. Religion can only become indissolubly connected with ethics if the neuter term 'the good' is replaced by the characteristic phrase of Hebrew prophecy, *The Holy One of Israel*; a phrase which our Lord seems to repeat in a simple and more universal form when He says *One there is Who is good* (εἷς ὁ ἀγαθός).²

It follows from what has been said that human nature is a real image and mirror of the divine. We find ourselves compelled by a necessity of thought to interpret God by the phenomena of human personality. The preface to the Decalogue encourages us so to do in the mere collocation of 'I' and 'thou.' Yet we need the caution that we must not think of the wisdom and the ways of the Almighty as if they did not infinitely transcend the intelligence of man; we are not to suppose that nothing is to be believed concerning God other, or more, than man discovers in himself or in other creatures. Man attains to a real knowledge of the divine nature in so far as he recognizes by faith his vocation to imitate God, and makes such imitation the law of his life. But there must always be a height which he cannot scale, a depth which he cannot penetrate. It is a favourite thesis of the Cambridge Platonist, John Smith,

¹ Cp. A. B. Davidson, *The Theology of the Old Testament*, pp. 106 foll.

² Matt. xix. 17. Cp. p. 18 above.

that ' the best way to know God is by an attentive reflection upon our own souls ' ; but he points out with equal emphasis that this knowledge is necessarily limited by the conditions of human mortality. Consequently our knowledge is but here in its infancy ; ' there is an higher knowledge or an higher degree of this knowledge that doth not, that cannot, descend upon us in these earthly habitations.' The sight of God which we may now enjoy ' makes pious souls breathe after that blessed time when mortality shall be swallowed up of life, when they shall no more behold the Divinity through those dark mediums that eclipse the blessed sight of it.'¹

Finally, since God is a personal Being, it is clear that man's conception of duty is enlarged according to the degree of his knowledge of God. We must bear in mind that the words *I am Jehovah thy God* conveyed a far wider and deeper significance to the generation which had experienced the teaching of the eighth century prophets than to the generation of the Exodus. The words of God had become charged with deeper meaning, and were seen to cover a wider field of human activity and thought than was once imagined. So for us the fuller unveiling of the divine personality through the immense enlargement of human knowledge involves a greater measure of moral obligation, a more constraining call to obey and intelligently to co-operate with the *good, acceptable and perfect will of God*.² Duty is more clearly seen to be the willing and free service offered by sons to a Father.

2. *I am Jehovah thy God*. We have already pointed out the force of the appeal to Israel implied in the mighty acts of redemptive love which it had witnessed. The ten words proceed from One Who has manifested His righteous-

¹ *Select Discourses*, i. § 3.

² Rom. xii. 2.

ness and lovingkindness in the deliverance of an enslaved people from bondage. The call to obedience takes the form of a personal appeal. *Cor ad cor loquitur*. We cannot fail to notice the significance of the fact that the phrase *Jehovah thy God* occurs five times in the course of the Decalogue, as if to remind Israel that gratitude and love must be the root and mainspring of all duty. This seems to have been recognized in the Passover ritual as it was observed in our Lord's time. It was customary for the head of the family to rehearse the events connected with the Exodus, dwelling upon the bitterness of the bondage which Israel had endured in Egypt, and the blessedness of the great deliverance. The recital ended with a formula of thanksgiving which may possibly have suggested the language of the eucharistic 'preface' in the earliest liturgies :—

'Wherefore we are bound to confess, praise, glorify, honour, exalt, celebrate and bless, extol and magnify Him Who wrought for our fathers and for us all these wonders. He brought us forth from slavery to liberty, from sadness to joy, from grief to festival, from darkness into great light, from subjection to redemption, and we say before Him, Alleluia !' ¹

The very name 'Jehovah' in fact contained a kind of pledge that what God had been to Israel in the past, He was willing and able to be for the future: the Saviour and strengthening Guide of His people throughout all the toils of their pilgrimage. He had made Himself known in action and fact as a personal Being, willing to enter into covenant with man, and able to control the course of history in fulfilment of His purposes of grace. No words could

¹ *Pesachim* x. 5, cited by R. M. Woolley, *The Liturgy of the Primitive Church*, p. 64.

adequately declare—only the subsequent course of history could manifest—all that Jehovah was willing to do for His people.¹ This faith lies behind the acceptance by Israel of the terms of the covenant: *all that Jehovah hath spoken will we do and be obedient.*² It was a faith which was gradually widened and deepened by the circumstances of the national history, and by the ethical teachings of prophecy; a faith ever expectant of some fresh manifestation of Jehovah's grace. The will or mind revealed in the commandments was one that looked to the future; that cherished far-reaching purposes for the human race; that would fulfil itself in many ways, and by many gradual steps lead man to God.³ The name 'He Who is' or 'will be' has the same kind of fulness of significance which we connect with the repeated 'I am' of our Lord. Both to nations and individuals God Himself is the satisfaction of every need, the answer to every prayer, the Author of every spiritual blessing. He gives what He requires, and if He calls man to holiness, enables him effectually to respond.

3. Another point of doctrine implied in the preface to the Decalogue is the individuality and moral responsibility of man. The words 'Thee' and 'Thou' recognize the incommunicable dignity of each man's personality, while at the same time they place all men upon one level of obligation, so far as the primary principles of morality are concerned. In the earliest stage of Israel's history the sense of individuality is undeveloped. 'The habit of the old world was to think much of the community and little of

¹ See Exod. iii. 14, where the versions of Aquila and Theodotion have ἔσομαι [ᾗς] ἔσομαι. See McNeile's note, *ad loc.*

² Exod. xxiv. 7.

³ Cp. Iren. *adv. haer.* iv. 9. 3: 'Non pauci gradus qui ducunt hominem ad Deum.'

the individual life. . . . The God was the God of the nation or tribe, and He knew and cared for the individual only as a member of the community.' ¹ This is obviously true, but the Old Testament seems in more than one way to prepare the way for a doctrine of individual responsibility and for what is its complement—a doctrine of the divine providence and care for individuals. Thus it represents the redemptive movement as beginning with an individual man's venture of faith, and it sets before us at each stage of the history the figures of men, on whose prompt obedience, or bold ventures of faith, the cause of God's kingdom from time to time depended. In self-surrender to the call of God, the soul of man became conscious of itself and of its need of divine grace and guidance. Moreover, although it is with a family or group of tribes that Almighty God establishes His covenant-relationship, and the Mosaic legislation as a whole is addressed to, and is intended to regulate, the life of a community; yet the mere fact that God raised up for His people leaders of commanding personality, like Moses himself, was an indication of the part which individuality was destined to play in the accomplishment of the divine purpose. We find, indeed, an express recognition of man's personal responsibility in many of the precepts of the 'Book of the Covenant,' which deal with the duties or offences of individuals in particular cases. But the Decalogue in any case (at least in its present form) belongs to an age when the consciousness of individuality had already come to something like maturity. Thus the statement that Jehovah visits the sins of the fathers upon the children, *upon the third and upon the fourth generation of them that hate Him*, implies

¹ Robertson Smith, *The Religion of the Semites*, pp. 241, 242; cp. Church, *The Discipline of the Christian Character*, serm. 1.

that the welfare of a small group of persons in the community depends upon the conduct of a single individual.

Accordingly we may regard the commandments as witnessing, though in rudimentary fashion, to the truth of man's relation as an individual soul to God; just as it anticipates in the tenth commandment that 'inwardness' which is characteristic of New Testament ethics. In respect of both these features the Decalogue may claim a certain universality. It is a code for all men under all circumstances. Their rights as individuals are conditioned by the fulfilment of their duties as members of a community.

4. Let it be remembered, finally, that the true end of man, is moral and spiritual liberty. Jehovah appeals to man's whole personality, as redeemed by Himself from the house of bondage, in order that he may taste of true freedom. To separate oneself from the world and to live unto God is to enter the house of liberty.¹ It is from this point of view that we should consider the negative or prohibitory form of the commandments. They were given to a people who in their enslaved and degraded condition had contracted habits of idolatry and vice which must be eradicated before they could rise to higher things. But we have learned in the school of Christ that restraint, mortification, is only the initial stage in the road that leads to life. Israel's separation from Egypt with its idols had as its goal the service of the living God. So in all training of character, a negative discipline must precede the unfettered exercise of capacities, the full development of personality. The negative form of the Decalogue corresponds to this necessary process of the moral life; it answers to that primary aspect of conver-

¹ Origen.

sion which is described in the phrase *repentance from dead works*, but which from another point of view may be regarded as a turning of the soul *toward God*.¹ For prohibition is not, and cannot be, the last word of God to man. His claim on us is positive: the claim of One Who seeks the love and trust of His creatures. The end of the commandment as St. Paul says is love. *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul and with all thy mind and with all thy strength*; and, *Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself*.² In the prophetic books of the Old Testament, and among them we may reckon for present purposes the Book of Deuteronomy, we see the result of the stern discipline to which Israel was submitted. We see the awakening of religious affection, bearing its fruit in due season in the tender devotion and the thirst for God which breathes in the Psalter. It is through the rigorous discipline of the will, through the self-restraint and self-mortification involved in obedience, that we train our capacity for feeling and affection. Love, peace and joy in God are the climax and crown of a life of which the foundation is laid in steadfastness, meekness (that is, submission to discipline) and temperance (the control of impulse and desire).

By way of summary, it may be said that in the commandments Jehovah sets before His people the way of life. Life in its highest sense is the gift of God, and is sustained by continual dependence upon Him. It consists in the due fulfilment of personal relationships: in the knowledge of God, in the service of our neighbour, in the sacrifice of self. As we approach the detailed study of the ten words, we may remember that the saying, *If thou wouldst enter into*

¹ Heb. vi. 1; Acts xx. 21.

² Mark xii. 30.

*life, keep the commandments,*¹ is an utterance of Him Who is *the Life*. Commenting upon this circumstance, Clement of Alexandria finely observes: 'Our Lord and Saviour is glad to be asked a question appropriate to Him, a question addressed to the Life concerning life, to the Saviour concerning salvation, to the Teacher concerning the sum of the doctrines taught by Him, to the Truth concerning the true immortality, to the Word concerning the Father's word, to the Perfect One concerning the perfect rest, to the Incorruptible concerning the sure incorruption. He is enquired of concerning those very things for which He came down from above. . . . And being called "Good," He takes occasion first from that very word to begin His instruction, directing the disciple to God, the Good, the Primal Being, the only Source of that eternal life which the Son hath received from Him and bestows upon us.'²

Life, which is the promise of the Gospel, consists in fellowship with Deity; and since the moral law is the eternal bond of union between God and man, our Saviour points to the fulfilment of the commandments as the way of life. As they come from God and therefore claim the obedience of His reasonable creatures, so they lead to God because they define in broad outline the life of love; and, since the commandments can only be interpreted aright under the guidance of the spirit of love, the only complete exposition of the essential spirit and significance is to be found in the life and character of Jesus Christ.

II

*Thou shalt have none other gods before Me.*³

According to the arrangement of the Decalogue that pre-

¹ Matt. xix. 17. ² *Quis dives salvetur*, 6.

³ or *beside Me*, R.V. marg.

vails in the West, the first two commandments form a single precept, the second being the necessary complement of the first. The distinction between them, however, is sufficiently marked to warrant us in dealing with them separately. The first gives prominence to the redemptive grace of Jehovah; the second to His righteousness as the moral Governor of the universe. The first dwells on the mystery of the divine unity; the second on the spirituality of the divine nature. The first implies that God can be possessed by man as the Author of all possible blessedness; the second, that He cannot be forsaken or displeased by His reasonable creatures except at their own infinite peril. Each of the two commandments, in fact, contains a moral principle which is rooted in the divine self-revelation. God is one, therefore no other being can satisfy the spiritual needs of man. God is spirit: therefore no created object can adequately represent Him, and no worship befits Him which is not offered *in spirit and in truth*.

The first commandment brings before us the thought of Almighty God as One Who has already manifested His Being and Character in nature, in conscience, in prophecy, in history, as the living and omnipresent object of human trust and hope.

At the period of the Exodus the Hebrews were as yet in a rudimentary stage of their education. Inheriting the vague animistic beliefs of their Semitic ancestors, it is probable that they had already advanced, even before the descent into Egypt, so far towards monolatry as to acknowledge Jehovah, the God Whom Moses proclaimed, and Whom their immediate forefathers had worshipped, as their own tribal deity: *the God of their fathers, the God of the Hebrews*.¹

¹ Cp. Exod. iii. 18; iv. 5.

In Egypt they had been surrounded, and possibly attracted, by the religious emblems of an immense system of polytheism. But they learned in the events of the Exodus the indisputable truth that their tribal God was not only incomparably superior in power to the deities of heathendom ; but also that He was a righteous Being, the Avenger of the helpless and oppressed, the compassionate Redeemer of an enslaved people. This knowledge of God dated from the overthrow of the Egyptians in the Red Sea ¹ ; and the Deity thus revealed had deigned to enter into a covenant of grace with Israel and to make them His own people. *I am the Lord your God which brought you out of the land of Egypt to be your God.*² Accordingly from this time forward the Hebrews regarded themselves as *the people of Jehovah*, and their whole future as a nation depended upon their fidelity to their merciful and holy Deliverer. The essential condition of fulfilling their divine vocation was faithfulness to the light they already enjoyed. They were called to a life of fellowship with God, to a life of ever advancing knowledge and ever more intelligent obedience. So we find the prophets calling on their contemporaries to *walk in the light of Jehovah*, to *follow on to know Jehovah*, to *seek Jehovah*, that is to *seek righteousness and meekness*.³ It was through the growing conviction that Jehovah, as compared with the gods of the heathen nations, was a *righteous* Being, that Israel advanced, under the guidance of its prophets, to a true 'ethical monotheism' ; and learned that since righteousness is the supreme law for the universe, the God of Israel must be also *the Lord of the whole earth*.⁴

¹ Hosea xii. 9 ; xiii. 4 : *I am the Lord thy God from the land of Egypt.*

² Num. xv. 41.

³ Isa. ii. 5 ; Hosea vi. 3 ; Zeph. ii. 3.

⁴ Micah iv. 13.

In the first commandment the appeal of duty is based on that which man already knows concerning the divine nature. In every generation the call is repeated, *Thou shalt have none other gods before Me*. Each generation, if it would rise to the height of its moral possibilities, is bound to be true to its present knowledge of God's character and will. Each generation finds itself confronted with new problems of duty, and these have to be brought into the light of truth, and solved under the guidance of the Spirit of truth. It is clear, therefore, that the law of duty looms larger and more majestic in proportion to the fulness and explicitness of revelation. He Who appeals to us in the moral law is the same Being Who spoke to Israel of old ; but He has more fully unveiled His character and His purpose for mankind. Science has disclosed, ever more richly and insistently, the infinite range of His wisdom and His power ; history has continually manifested in new instances His inexorable righteousness and His persistent hostility to sin. In all greatness of human character, in all grandeur and nobility of gifts, mental and spiritual, He has displayed something of the wealth and splendour of His thoughts concerning humanity. But *in these last days He hath spoken unto us in a Son* ¹ ; in Whom He has manifested both the length and breadth and depth of His own redemptive compassion, and the spiritual heights which human nature is capable of attaining. With a vastly deeper sense of its inexhaustible significance than the Jew could possess, the modern Christian hears the message of the Decalogue. For him the appeal that lies behind the words ' Thou shalt,' ' Thou shalt not,' is that of a Father and Saviour ' Whom to know is life and joy to make mention of His name ' ² ; Who not only

¹ Heb. i. 2.

² Hooker, *Eccl. Pol.* i. 2. 3.

bids us be like Himself, but bestows the grace we need to respond effectually to His call. In a word, the first commandment comes to us charged with that significance which only the earthly life of the Son of God could impart to it. *The great and first commandment is Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.*¹ To 'have' none other god is to rest in *the only true God*, Who has declared the threefold Name in His Son Jesus Christ. To know God as He has revealed Himself is to love Him, and the test of love is obedience to His will.

We may think of the commandment as implying three main obligations.

1. There is, first, the obligation of repentance. The words *Thou shalt have none other gods before Me* may be regarded as recalling man from every form of false worship and self-devotion. So we find St. Paul immediately connecting the call to repentance with the revelation of God in Christ. *The times of ignorance*, he says, *God overlooked ; but now He commandeth men that they should all everywhere repent.*² 'All men' because *there is no distinction : for all in different ways and degrees have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.*³ Certainly the history of Israel, previous to the period of the exile, is a record of repeated apostasies. The witness of Psalmists and Prophets is decisive. *Many a time did He deliver them ; but they rebelled against Him with their own inventions.*⁴ It has been suggested that idolatry exercised this fatal fascination for the Jewish people because it implied a lower level of morality than the austere religion of Jehovah. It satisfied deep-seated needs and impulses of human nature. It laid no heavy burden upon conscience.

¹ Matt. xxii. 37.

² Acts xvii. 30.

³ Rom. iii. 22, 23.

⁴ Ps. cvi. 42. See also the 'theodicy' of Ezek. xx.

It made no stern demand upon faith. In any case it seems that the obstinate tendency to idolatry, sometimes in coarse, sometimes in refined forms, was scarcely eradicated even by the severe discipline of the captivity. Meanwhile the Gentiles, unfaithful to the light of reason and conscience, became *vain in their reasonings*.¹ In the New Testament the word 'vanity' is used to describe the condition of the heathen world. The entire conversation of *the Gentiles that know not God*, their mode of life, their ideals, their aims, their pursuits, their endeavours, were vain. The objects of their worship were 'vain things.' They walked in utter aimlessness of mind, without moral purpose or spiritual aspiration. They had missed the true end of existence, since they had failed to *feel after Him and find Him* Whose power and divinity they might have discerned in the works of creation, Whose future judgment of them and of their deeds was attested by the solemn presages of conscience.²

The precept then is a call to the soul of man, ever repeated in the history of religion to *turn from vanities to serve the living God*.³ To each generation it speaks with new force and meaning. For there are many forms of false worship in the world, many idols of the kind against which St. John warns the Church in a passage which is possibly the latest utterance of Scripture.⁴ Religions are many if we reckon as religion that which 'a man's heart owns to as most mighty and most irresistible in all things round him; what he bows down to and sincerely worships in the secret sanctuary of will and desire'; what 'fills and holds captive his soul and

¹ Rom. i. 21.

² 1 Pet. i. 18. Cp. Acts xiv. 15 (where *μάταια* = 'idols' and 'idolatry'); Eph. iv. 17; Acts xvii. 27.

³ Cp. 1 Thess. i. 9.

⁴ 1 John v. 20. See Westcott, *ad loc.*

heart and mind ; in which he trusts above all things ; which above all things he longs for and hopes for.' ¹ To multitudes money is an idol, for covetousness *is idolatry*. They look to wealth for happiness, security, social power and prestige, forgetting that they place it on a level with Christ if they regard it as a necessary condition of happiness.² To some men beauty is an idol ; beauty in sound or form, figure or colour. Such an idolatry of beauty has been called 'the master passion of the renaissance in Italy,' bringing, however, its own punishment in 'the deep degradation both of art and character.'³ So there are intellectual, economic and political idols, 'knowledge,' 'public opinion,' 'liberty,' 'freedom of competition,' and the like. We may be reminded of Bacon's famous enumeration of idols which beset the human mind and make it impervious to truth.⁴ Nations are tempted to make an idol of material wealth, of armaments, or of military glory.⁵ *Some put their trust in chariots and some in horses* : a sentence as true to-day as when it was first written by the Psalmist.⁶ Individual men deliberately set before themselves pleasure as their chief good, or even mere physical strength and prowess. But perhaps the most striking example of idolatry in modern times is that individualism which the rapid expansion of

¹ Church, *Cathedral and University Sermons*, xii. p. 156.

² Cp. the maxim of Erasmus : 'Aequasti Christo pecuniam si ea te potest vel felicem vel infelicem reddere' (*Enchiridion*, iv.).

³ Church, *ubi supra*, p. 166.

⁴ Bacon, *Novum organon*, bk. 1, aph. xxxviii. foll. : 'Idola et notiones falsae, quae intellectum humanum jam occuparunt, atque in eo alte haerent, . . . mentes hominum ita obsident, ut veritati aditus difficilis pateat.'

⁵ The word 'Glory' is said to occur in most, if not all, of Napoleon's despatches.

⁶ Ps. xx. 7. Cp. Isa. ii. 7, 8 Deut. xvii. 16, 17

industry has tended to foster ; an individualism which in its essence is selfishness, and in its ultimate social effects is ruinous to national well-being. There are many signs that we are living in the midst of those 'hard' or 'grievous' times when men are *lovers of self, lovers of money*.¹ The individualism which is nowadays producing such disquieting effects and directly paving the way for such a formidable, because ill-considered, social reconstruction, is no new phenomenon in history. It is closely connected with a decadent or debased form of religion. Anti-christian ideas bear fruit in anti-social habits of life and thought. So it was with ancient Rome in its decay² ; so it is in days when the thought of God has largely disappeared from the minds of men, and when materialistic habits of thought are apt to discredit the very existence of spiritual forces or altruistic motives. 'We are suffering on all sides,' writes Bp. Westcott, 'and we know that we are suffering, from a tyrannical individualism. This reveals itself in social life by the pursuit of personal pleasure ; in commercial life by the admission of the principle of unlimited competition ; in our theories

¹ 2 Tim. iii. 1, 2. Bp. Wilson in his *Maxims* writes : 'There are few who have not their idols, which their hearts adore, in which they put their trust and place their happiness. *The worst of all is ourselves*' [ed. Relton, p. 71]. Cp. the quaint exposition in Wycliffe's adaptation of Thoresby's Catechism : 'Who breaks the first commandment ? Proud men, worldly men, and fleshly men. Why proud men ? For they make the devil their god. Why worldly men ? For they make worldly goods their god. Why fleshly men ? For they make their belly their god.'

² See a powerful passage in Augustine, *de civitate Dei*, ii. 20. The close relation of individualism to 'naturalistic' modes of thought has been pointed out by Eucken. See W. R. Boyce Gibson, *R. Eucken's Philosophy of Life*, ch. 3. Cp. also Dr. Bussell's statement in his art. 'Roman Empire' in Murray's *Illustrated Bible Dictionary* : 'The weakness of the Roman Empire did not lie in its political system, but in the decay of its social enthusiasms.'

of life by the acceptance of material standards of prosperity and progress. . . . We need to show to the world the reality of spiritual power.' ¹

Against all such types of false worship, in other words, against all false ideals, social and religious, the first commandment bears a steadfast and abiding witness. All inordinate attachment to that which is not God tends to darken the understanding, and to take away the power of recognizing the divine presence in the world and the divine claim on human life. A *moral* darkness (Rom. i. 21) is the consequence of unfaithfulness to the teaching of Nature and conscience about God. Blindness to His presence in the world produces blindness to His will.² When *truth is fallen in the street, uprightness cannot enter*. Moreover, this moral law finds its verification on a large scale in national life. By setting up idols, material or intellectual, a people is in danger of forfeiting the guidance of God and so abandoning the only solid hope of national progress. *Ephraim is joined to idols ; let him alone. They that regard lying vanities forsake their own mercy.*³

We have seen that the first commandment is in its primary aspect a summons to repentance. It exhorts us to relinquish anything which takes the place of God in our hearts ; which becomes the object of our keenest desire, our most ardent attachment, our strongest confidence. It is a call, in the first instance, to *detachment*. The 'idols' which attract us are apt to vary at different periods of life. But at every stage of life men are in danger of seeking their highest good in something that is not God. It is owing to their crushing sense of this inveterate tendency of human

¹ *Social Aspects of Christianity*, pp. 138 f.

² Cp. Isa. lix. 2-10, and 14. ³ Hosea iv. 17 ; Jonah ii. 3.

nature that God's saints in all ages have been conspicuous in penitence; have acknowledged themselves to be the *chief of sinners*. They have learned, sometimes early, sometimes late in life, how supremely worthy of the heart's highest devotion is God; how heinous is even the least unfaithfulness to the light of conscience. We naturally think in this connexion of such a book as St. Augustine's *Confessions*. He tells us how he came at last to see sin in its true colours, as the attempt to find elsewhere than in God that which would satisfy his nature and bring him freedom and peace. He points out that all the blessings which men strive to secure by sin are to be found in their perfection only in God. 'The soul,' he cries, 'seeks apart from Thee those things which it cannot find in their purity and integrity save by returning to Thee.'¹ This is the great conviction which sooner or later dawns upon the soul when it sets itself to seek God. True contrition is not the beginning of conversion, but in a sense its crown and climax, its reward and fruit. Of a noble person of strenuous life it was reported to a friend, 'He is in great trouble of conscience. He does not, indeed, charge himself with any grievous sin, but bitterly bewails his lack of love to Almighty God.'

It is well that at the outset of our study of the commandments we should be led to strike this note, and to remind ourselves that in proclaiming the all-embracing love and redemptive grace of Him Who is *our Hope and Strength*, the first commandment awakens in a sincere heart the consciousness of its past waywardness and blindness, the sense of its profound need of divine forgiveness and help.

2. Repentance is a stage or moment in the awakening of faith. We may regard the first commandment as anticipat-

¹ *Conf.* ii. 6. 13.

ing the lesson taught by our Lord when He bids the disciples *Have faith in God*.¹ If penitence consists in the turning of the soul from its idols, faith implies a positive movement of the soul towards God. The aspects of faith presented in the Bible, and even in particular portions of it like a single Pauline Epistle, are many and are widely different.² In dealing with the first commandment we are concerned with faith in its relation to practical religion. Faith is unquestionably a principle of knowledge. It implies a certain view of the universe as a whole : the view that it is a rational and comprehensible order, which bears perpetual witness to the intelligent purpose and controlling providence of its Author. But the faith here in question is primarily a principle of *conduct* ; a principle on which the moral life can be built up, and which imparts stability and permanence to character.

It is a marked feature of the Mosaic legislation that Israel is never suffered to forget the character and claim of Jehovah as giving a sanction to all ordinances, of whatsoever kind, that regulate the life and conduct. The recurrence of the phrase *I am Jehovah*, inserted again and again at intervals in different series of laws, was calculated to remind the people that they were in a real sense consecrated to the divine service ; that all life was to be lived as in the presence of God. There is perhaps a hint of this in the closing words of the commandment : *none other gods before me*, that is, *in My presence*.³ The faith which hallows and solemnizes

¹ Mark xi. 22.

² See for instance Sanday and Headlam, *Comm. on the Epistle to the Romans*, pp. 33, 34.

³ Nicolas de Lyra explains the words of the Vulg. *coram me* : ' id est, in nullo loco vel tempore habebis [deos alienos] quia praesens sum omni tempore et loco.'

life is a belief in the living presence of God, belief in an unseen Being Who tries and searches the hearts of men, Who discerns and sifts their thoughts and passes judgment on their deeds. It was only by slow degrees that the Jew learned to realize the reality of the divine omnipresence. In primitive times the Deity was conceived as inhabiting a fixed spot, or sojourning in an earthly tabernacle. The prophets prepared the way for more spiritual conceptions by dwelling on the immediate and direct intervention of God in nature and history. They overlooked secondary in their contemplation of primary causes. They looked on the world as God's world, and saw His hand outstretched, His arm laid bare, in the judgments that fell upon the heathen, or the acts of deliverance in which Israel rejoiced. So the Hebrews gradually rose to the conception that the God of Israel was the Almighty Ruler of the universe, controlling the restless movements of the nations, and guiding the issues of Israel's history in fulfilment of His age-long purpose of grace. We may say that faith, full grown, finds its expression in the words of the Psalmist, *Thou art about my path and about my bed and spiest out all my ways.*¹ The Jew was not only conscious of the sacredness of common life, as the votary of primitive Roman religion might have been; he had also a penetrating sense that he was upheld, watched and judged by a Person with Whom he might, if he would, hold continual converse and fellowship. He felt himself to be walking *before God*: in the presence of a spiritual Being Who knew what was in him and Who tried and tested all his actions by the standard of perfect righteousness.²

¹ Ps. cxxxix. 2.

² The same belief is to a great extent characteristic of the religion of Islam: 'this recognition of a divine, personal, unseen Sovereignty; of One Who is not sought by men, but Who seeks men;

Such is the faith which the commandment requires and which we greatly need to recover in modern life. A consistent believer in God can make no rigid distinction between the 'secular' and the divine, the tasks of earth and the things of heaven. In every transaction and every relationship he is aware of God, conscious of His claim and of His purpose, sensitive to His guidance, alive to the spiritual significance of the duties and burdens which fall to his lot. With an eye spiritually enlightened he finds everywhere in the visible world glimpses of a hidden glory, tokens of compassion, and parables of judgment. He discerns in his fellow-men the lineaments of Christ Himself. He looks at the social condition of his country in the light of God's revealed will, and steadily resists the tendency which besets the modern mind either to regard commercial and industrial transactions as lying outside the sphere of religion, or to lose in the absorbing pursuit of pleasure or wealth the sense of accountability to a living and present God.

There is a suggestive prayer in Bishop Wilson's *Sacra Privata* which implies that even professing Christians are in danger of falling into practical atheism. 'O God, look mercifully down upon this Church, in which I serve at Thine altar; purge all its members from all atheism, heresy, schism and profaneness.'¹ Forgetfulness of God is no imaginary peril amid the engrossing pursuits and activities of a highly organized civilization. The hurry and pressure of city life: the incessant struggle for subsistence: the pursuit of comfort: the spirit of materialism in a hundred forms—these shut out the thought of God. The first commandment recalls to us the fact of His personal presence among men.

Who calls them, and chooses them to do His work,' etc. F. D. Maurice, *The Religions of the World*, 146.

¹ Cp. Westcott, *The Historic Faith*, p. 41.

It deepens in us the sense of moral responsibility. It chastens the temper of self-complacency. It was the secret of that 'tremendous seriousness' which men noted in Bishop Butler ; of that calm intrepidity in peril which has distinguished Christian soldiers, statesmen and missionaries ; of that steadfast patience which has sustained great social reformers and defenders of the faith in their conflict with the perversity or apathy of their contemporaries. The man of faith passes through life overshadowed by the thought of God : looking to Him, leaning on Him, communing with Him : continually sustained by the vision of Him Who is at once the righteous Ruler and Judge of the world, and the Source of all grace and moral power to individual souls.

3. The first commandment, as interpreted by our Lord, is also a call to devotion. *Thou shalt have none other gods. Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.* In a real sense, therefore, the first commandment contains in brief the whole of morality, for *Love is the fulfilling of the law* ; and the true love of God necessarily inspires the love of man.¹ The problem of practical morality is that of keeping alive the spirit of love, of perpetuating the self-dedication of heart and will to the service of God. *With purpose of heart to cleave unto the Lord*² : this is the sum of religion. For the 'heart,' according to the usage of Scripture, is a comprehensive term including all human faculties. It is the seat of feeling, of thought, but above all of will.³ Love is no mere emotion or sentiment : it is an attitude of the entire personality, a character, a fixed habit of self-surrender and self-communication. To 'have' God implies a relationship of

¹ 1 John iv. 20.

² Acts xi. 23.

³ Cp. Sanday and Headlam on Rom. i. 21.

mutual and spontaneous self-giving; *He that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God and God in him.*¹

III

Accordingly, the all-embracing duty inculcated by the first commandment is that of responding to the call, the purpose, and the manifested love of God. If 'true devotion consists in having our hearts always devoted to God, as the sole Fountain of all happiness,'² the chief aim of the Christian life is to kindle and to maintain the spirit of devotion.

Some means to this end may be briefly considered.

I. Devotion is kindled by recollection of God's loving-kindness, which finds utterance in thanksgiving. It is very striking that the Book of Deuteronomy, from which our Lord derives His exposition of the great and first commandment (Deut. vi. 4, 5), has as its keynote the word 'remember.' *Remember what the Lord did to Pharaoh. Remember that thou wast a servant in the land of Egypt. Remember all the way the Lord led thee,* etc. The secret of gratitude is frequent contemplation of the mercies and blessings which God has bestowed. The duty of thanksgiving is repeatedly enjoined by St. Paul; and indeed it is a very important, though perhaps much neglected, part of practical religion. William Law even goes so far as to say: 'Would you know who is the greatest saint in the world? It is not he who prays most or fasts most; it is not he who gives most alms or is most eminent for temperance, chastity or justice; but it is he who is always thankful to God; . . . who receives everything as an instance of God's goodness, and has a heart always ready to praise God for it.'³ The sin of the heathen world, and the very cause of its moral ruin, was unthank-

¹ 1 John iv. 16.

² The opening sentence of Bishop Wilson's *Sacra Privata*.

³ *A Serious Call*, etc., ch. xv.

fulness : *knowing God they glorified Him not as God, neither gave thanks.*¹ Just as the preface to the first commandment was designed to awaken in the devout Israelite a thankful recollection of the debt he owed to the gracious Redeemer of his race, so for Christians, recollection of the divine mercies is an essential part of piety. Here meditation—the habit of *feeding* (as it were) on Scripture, and using it simply as the sustenance of the soul—will have its place. Indeed, the chief fruit of meditation is love, and love pours itself out, as we learn from the Psalter, in praise and benediction.²

2. Devotion is nourished by the spirit of detachment, or to express it otherwise, by mortification. *Thou shalt have none other gods.* We have, as Bishop Wilson says, to convince our hearts of ‘ the vanity of everything else to afford us any real help or comfort ’ ; for *if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him, and no man can serve two masters.* The habitual recollection of God and of His will tends to withdraw the soul from excessive dependence on earthly gifts and blessings. By learning to deny ourselves, to forego advantages or comforts which we might enjoy if we would, to refrain from pleasures or pursuits which distract or hinder us from the service of God, we learn the much-needed lesson that

‘ God alone can satisfy whom God alone created,’

and that it is not His gifts by which and for which we live, but *Himself*. He Himself is all that the soul needs : the Giver of light and truth, of power and peace.³

¹ Rom. i. 21.

² See St. Bernard’s beautiful language in *sermones in Cantica*, xi. and xiii.

³ Bern. *in Cant.* xi. 5 : ‘ Nam qui replet in bonis desiderium animae, ipse rationi futurus est plenitudo lucis, ipse voluntati multitudo pacis, ipse memoriae continuatio aeternitatis. O veritas,

3. 'In order to dispose our hearts to devotion,' says Bishop Wilson, 'the active life is to be preferred to the contemplative. To be doing good to mankind disposes the soul most powerfully to devotion.' We may remember how the apostolic writer crowns his list of Christian graces, each forming a step to something higher : *Add, he says, to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love.*¹ Man learns to love God by imitating Him : by showing forth in daily life, according to the measure of opportunity, some distant ray of His discriminating compassion, His tenderness, His kindness to man. The life of active charity to man draws the soul continually nearer to Him Who is Love.

4. Finally, the spirit of devotion is to be sought through prayer, for it is the gift of God, bestowed in response to the earnest desire of man. The hunger and thirst of the soul after righteousness, the longing for union with God, is satisfied by the gift of the Holy Spirit, which the Heavenly Father gives *to them that ask Him.*² Only when we are *filled with the Spirit* can we fulfil the law of our nature as it is embodied in the first commandment ; only so do we respond to His redemptive purpose for us, and our hearts become the dwelling place of God. For this, and nothing less, is the ultimate meaning of the phrase 'thou shalt have none other god.'

In a short treatise on 'the life of blessedness' (*de beata vita*), St. Augustine gives an account of a dialogue concerning the question 'Who is it that hath God?' Three answers are given, but none of them are entirely satisfactory. All the disputants agree that 'he who hath God is truly blessed,'

caritas, aeternitas ! O beata et beatificans Trinitas ! ad te mea misera trinitas miserabiliter suspirat, quoniam a Te infeliciter exultat.'

¹ 2 Pet. i. 7 (A.V.).

² Luke xi. 13.

but they differ as to the meaning of the expression 'hath God.' We perhaps find a clue to the answer in the thought that religion is a life of personal relationships. He may be said to 'have' God who cleaves to Him with every faculty of His personality : reason, affection, will. The Gentiles, St. Paul says, *refused to have God in their knowledge*.¹ Their reasoning faculty was unfaithful to the light and became darkened and perverted. So affection may be misdirected : *If any man love the world the love of the Father is not in him*.² The will also may be enlisted in the service of two masters, and this (as our Lord expressly taught us) is fatal to spiritual progress. Moral decision is what Christ requires of His followers ; His appeal is always to the *will*. God is the reward of a whole-hearted self-surrender, a prize to be laid hold of with all the energies of man's being. To 'have' God is to live in entire dependence on Him, and to direct towards Him every faculty we possess ; to adhere to Him with undivided heart ; to embrace Him as the one and all-sufficient good of the soul. The sense of thus possessing God is a spring of moral power. It enables the soul to say 'I ought to do the will of God and I can, because I have God in me and with me.' So as St. Cyril tersely observes : 'Sufficient for the life of godliness will be this alone, the knowledge that we *have God* : the one God, the true God, the eternal God.'³

Mihi autem adhaerere Deo bonum est : ponere in Domino Deo spem meam.⁴

¹ Rom. i. 28.

² 1 John ii. 15.

³ Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catecheses illuminandorum*, vi. 7. Cp. Phil. iv. 13.

⁴ Ps. lxxiii. 27 (Vulg.).

II

‘Thou shalt not make unto thee a graven image, nor the likeness of any form that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth : thou shalt not bow down thyself unto them, nor serve them : for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, upon the third and upon the fourth generation of them that hate Me ; and shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love Me and keep My commandments.’

CHAPTER IV

THE SECOND COMMANDMENT

THE first commandment may be regarded broadly as a rule for the heart. The second seems to be a rule for the thoughts. It forms a kind of natural supplement or corollary to the first, since it teaches that the one God Who claims the undivided allegiance of His reasonable creatures is also a spiritual Being Who, as He cannot be replaced by any created thing, so cannot be adequately represented by any material image or likeness.

As a matter of fact, the use of images in worship seems to mark a stage of degeneration in primitive religion. The second commandment is not a mere 'positive' precept delivered to a particular people at a special moment in its religious history. It seems rather to be a part of the Law of Nature, as we might infer from St. Paul's argument in Acts xvii. 29 : *Being then the offspring of God (as certain even of your own poets have said), we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and device of man.* There is abundant evidence to show that the introduction of images marked a comparatively advanced stage in the history of religion. According to some authorities, images were unknown in the earliest period of Roman religion, and the same appears to be certainly true of other ancient nations : Persia, Egypt, and Greece.¹

¹ Aug. *de civ. Dei*, iv. 31, quotes Varro as declaring : ' antiquos Romanos plus annos centum et septuaginta deos sine simulacro

'Men did not begin,' says Professor Robertson Smith, 'by worshipping emblems of divine powers, they brought their homage and offerings to the god himself.' Certainly in the ancient Semitic religion the god was regarded as inhabiting a sacred stone or tree. It was only with some advance in religious speculation that it became customary to represent the deity in a human or even in an animal form.¹ But idolatry, once established as an element in worship, took very deep and strong root. In Israel, as we may gather from its chequered history, the tendency to idolatry was astonishingly persistent, and was not finally eradicated even by the discipline of exile in Babylon. It would appear, however, that the use of images in worship was finally discarded when Israel became, as the result of restoration to its own land, no longer a nation but a church. It might perhaps be said that in post-exilic times idolatry rather changed its form than entirely disappeared. False and distorted notions of God's character and requirement gradually usurped in men's minds the place of God Himself; and in the tragic crisis of Israel's history we see the fatal consequences of a perverted religion. The blindness which led to the rejection of the Messiah was the result of idolatry, if not in a literal, at least in a spiritual sense. Our Lord spoke of His contemporaries as *an adulterous and sinful generation*.² Their attitude towards Himself was evidence of inward apostasy from God. The legalism of the Scribes

coluisse.' Cp. W. Warde Fowler, *The Religious Experience of the Roman People*, p. 146. See also a summary of facts and authorities in *Encyclopædia Biblica*, s.v. 'Idolatry.' Tacitus, *Germ.* ix., says of the German tribes: 'Ceterum nec cohibere parietibus deos neque in ullam humani oris speciem assimilare ex magnitudine caelestium arbitrantur.'

¹ *The Religion of the Semites*, p. 194.

² Mark viii. 38 (with Dr. Swete's note, *ad loc.*).

and Pharisees was in effect an idolatry of the Law. They sought not the glory of God, but the triumph of the Law and of the Law's religion. Their ideal for Israel was not so much that it should be a people of God as a people of the Law.¹

For the Christian Church, the prohibition contained in this precept assumes a different aspect in view of the fact of the Incarnation. During the first three or four centuries of its existence the Church made little use either of sculpture or painting as an aid to worship. There were no doubt symbolic representations of the Saviour in the catacombs and primitive churches, depicting Him as the Lamb or the Good Shepherd. Other symbols of the Faith were customary, such as a ship at anchor, or a dove (emblem of the Holy Spirit), or a fish, mystically representing by its Greek equivalent (*ἰχθύς*) the titles of Christ. There was also the figure of the 'Orante' ('praying one'), which was painted on some Christian sepulchres, and which seems to be a symbol of the soul of the departed. A marked change took place when the worship of the catacombs yielded to that of the early *basilicae*. The triumph of the Church gave an impulse to the art of painting; subjects taken from the Apocalypse and other parts of Scripture replaced the rude and simple representations of the Good Shepherd, and pictures of saints and martyrs began to find a place in the Churches—objects which seem soon to have occasioned some measure of superstitious veneration.²

¹ Cp. Schürer, *The Jewish People in the Time of Christ*, § 28.

² St. Augustine, *de mor. eccl. cathol.*, 75, speaks severely 'Novi multos esse sepulchorum et picturarum adoratores.' Of these and others who discredit the Christian name he says: 'quos et ipsa ecclesia condemnat et quos quotidie tanquam malos filios corrigere studet' (*ib.* 76).

The introduction of images in some places followed, and gave rise (as might have been expected) to serious practical abuses. The veneration of them seems to have become common during the fifth century. Miraculous powers were ascribed to them, reverence for them quickly ran to extravagant lengths. Accordingly, in spite of the fact that John Damascene (*d.* about 760) wrote a defence of image-worship on doctrinal grounds, the practice was looked upon with disfavour both in the Eastern and Western Churches, and various Eastern emperors took measures to suppress it. The Synod of Constantinople (754) prohibited the adoration of images, but thirty years later the Second Council of Nicaea (787) pronounced in favour of it. A distinction was made between worship (*λατρεία*), due only to God, and veneration or salutation (*προσκύνησις τιμητική* or *ἀσπασμός*). 'He who venerates the image,' says the decree of the Council, 'venerates the personality of Him Who is represented therein.' In the West, however, image-worship only gained tardy recognition. Charlemagne caused a refutation of the decrees of the Second Nicene Council to be drawn up, and the Synod of Frankfort (794), attended by Gallican, German, and possibly some English bishops, condemned the adoration of images. But the influence of Rome supported the decisions of the Greek Synod,¹ and though for some two centuries image-worship was rejected in the empire of the Franks, the Roman view finally prevailed. Thomas Aquinas follows the lead of John Damascene,² and a decree of the Council of Trent embodies the official decision of the Roman Church. It allows the use in churches of images of Christ, the Virgin and the Saints,

¹ The pope Hadrian I wrote an epistle to Charlemagne replying to the *libri Carolini*. See Gieseler, *Eccles. History*, vol. 2, p. 267 [E. T.].

² *Summa* iii. 25. art. 3.

and commands that they be duly honoured, 'not because we believe that they have any intrinsic divinity or virtue for which they should be worshipped, or that petitions should be addressed to them, or that such confidence should be placed in them as that wherewith the heathen regarded their idols, but because the veneration paid to them is directed to the originals (*prototypa*) which they represent.' ¹ This corresponds exactly to the teaching of John Damascene; but though innocuous in itself, the cult of images opened the door to manifold popular superstitions. Nor can we escape the conviction that when the desolating flood of Mohammedan conquest swept across the provinces of the Eastern Empire, the Church of the East to a great extent brought upon itself the calamities which overwhelmed it. 'The sense of a divine Almighty Will, to which all human wills were to be bowed, had evaporated amidst the worship of images, amidst moral corruptions, philosophical theories, religious controversies.' ²

I

The sin against which the commandment is directed is one of which idolatry in its literal sense is only a symptom, namely, that of dishonouring Almighty God by low and unworthy conceptions of Him. The idolatry of the heathen was only excusable in so far as it was due to ignorance.³ Even while he allows this, however, St. Paul plainly indicates that the obligation to think worthily of the Deity

¹ Sess. xxv.

² F. D. Maurice, *The Religions of the World*, p. 23; Warde Fowler, *Religious Experience of the Roman People*, p. 174, remarks that the use of images in worship necessarily tends to diminish *religio*—the sense of awe—in approaching the Deity.

³ Acts xvii. 30.

is a dictate of natural law, recognizable from the beginning by the light of reason itself. *We ought not to think* amiss in the matter because we are, and know by nature that we are, the offspring of God.¹

Unworthy conceptions of Deity may, speaking broadly, be regarded as taking one of two forms. On the one hand, it is possible to deny His *power*: to represent God as subject to limitations and defects, which either remove Him from the sphere of human knowledge (Agnosticism) or virtually banish Him from the universe which He has created (Deism). Either of these views implies in effect a denial of the revealed fact that *God is spirit*; that personality, as well divine as human, is a fact of the spiritual order; and that the material universe is subject to the control of spirit and tends towards the fulfilment of a rational and moral purpose. In the last resort the denial of the possibility of miracle seems to be based on an inadequate and unworthy conception of God. If God is spiritual and personal, He is free not only to reveal Himself to man, but also to manifest His will and character by intervening in the world, by actively controlling the course of history in the interests of a purpose of grace. The power that is at work in the universe, directing its progress and sustaining its operations, is to be interpreted by that with which, as personal beings, we are most familiar: the moral power of will.² We do infinite wrong to God when we fail to interpret His nature and mode of action by that which is highest within our sphere of observation—the *phenomena* of human will and personality.

¹ Acts xvii. 29.

² Cp. Bruce, *Apologetics*, p. 160. Cp. the vague use of the Latin word *Numen* (from *nuo*, as *flumen* from *fluo*), 'a being who exercises will-power,' 'manifests will.' See Warde Fowler, *The Religious Experience of the Roman People*, p. 118 foll.

A more common error, perhaps, than the denial of the divine power is misconception of the divine character. The Psalmist reproaches the sinner who, deceived by the solemn 'silence of God,' thinks wickedly that He is such a one as the sinner himself.¹ But something of the same self-deceit occasionally lingers even among professing Christians. The Pantheistic mode of thought, which exaggerates and distorts the mystery of the divine immanence, tends towards a denial of all moral distinctions, and represents evil and good alike as manifestations of the divine in human nature. It implies that God is indifferent to the moral quality of actions, and that free-will in man is an illusion.

But professed adherents of Pantheism are not now in question. We are thinking rather of those who conceive of God in accordance, not with what is highest, but with what is weakest and faultiest in human nature; who (as John Smith says) 'converse not with the goodness of God, and therefore are apt to attribute their impotent passions and peevishness of spirit to Him.'² Superstition is defined by the same writer as follows: 'Such an apprehension of God in the thoughts of men as renders Him grievous and burdensome to them.' As such an idea of God springs from ignorance, so it bears fruit in a vain form of worship—'a forced and jejune devotion, void of inward life and power.'³ It is, in fact, a form of idolatry. 'They imagine,' says St. Bernard, 'that He Who is kind to man is harsh and severe; that He Who is pitiful is merciless and implacable; that He Who is altogether worthy to be loved is cruel and terrible. Thus does iniquity lie to itself, fashioning for itself an idol.'

¹ Ps. l. 21. ² *Select Discourses*, 'Of Superstition,' p. 27.

³ *Ibid.* 36. Cp. Bern. in *Cant.* xxxviii. 2.

It is needless to illustrate at length the different ways in which men are apt to cherish unworthy notions of God.

The Swiss theologian, Francis Turretin, devotes a large part of his exposition of the first two commandments to a polemical discussion of the *cultus* of the saints, which in his day was the occasion of so many abuses and superstitions. We need not follow him in this, but it may be well to remind ourselves that there are obvious dangers in a practice which is certainly not warranted by any passage of the New Testament, and which has a *tendency* to impair the absolute confidence and trustfulness with which Christ would have us approach our heavenly Father—looking to Him as One Who alone can perfectly understand us, and alone can supply the unfathomable needs, bodily and spiritual, of the nature which He has made.¹ Without condemning a practice which many devout persons have found helpful to their spiritual life, we may yet hold that there is a more excellent way into which our Lord Himself has guided us; that the most loving and trustful thoughts of God are the truest, and that the very name ‘Father’ is a pledge of His willingness to be all in all to those whom He deigns to call His *beloved children*.²

II

Two positive duties seem to be implied in the second commandment.

¹ Turretin, *Inst. Theol. Elenct.*, loc. xi, ‘De Lege Dei,’ quaest. vii. § 12: ‘Invocatio sanctorum nec habet praeceptum, nec promissum, nec exemplum in Scriptura, quo nitatur, adeoque nihil aliud est quam ἐθελοθρησκεία, . . . Urgetur quidem passim invocatio Dei, sed nusquam mentio fit invocationis creaturarum,’ etc. See the question examined in Andrewes, *Two Answers to Cardinal Perron*.

² Eph. v. 1.

1. First, the duty of holy fear. The second and the third commandments differ from the rest in so far as each contains not merely a prohibition, but a warning. It may be that in respect of these particular precepts mankind is specially prone to offend.¹ This may explain the solemn mention in the commandment of the divine jealousy, and of the judgments wherewith God 'visits' those who 'hate Him,' that is, who persist in doing the evil which He hates. The 'jealousy' of Jehovah is the counterpart of His loving-kindness. The tie which united Him to Israel was a relationship of love, often represented in pre-exilic prophecy under the image of a marriage-bond. God's tenderness to His people has been that of a husband to a wayward and erring wife. The ascription to Him of 'jealousy' corresponds to this kind of imagery. Jehovah is unwilling to endure the dominance of a rival deity in the affections of His chosen. There is a trace of this older idea of the divine jealousy in St. Paul's protest against the attempt of nominal Christians to combine the worship of the true God with participation in heathen sacrificial rites: *Do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? are we stronger than He?*²

The 'jealousy' of God is the direct consequence of the relationship in which He stands to the souls which He has made exclusively for Himself. He claims an entire and undivided allegiance. He cannot witness unmoved the failure of His purpose. He cannot tolerate in any soul that aversion from Himself which is its spiritual death. The judgments which descend upon nations and individuals are divinely intended to recall them to the recollection of God

¹ So T. Aquinas suggests: *Summa*, i. ii^o. 100. 7 ad 4.

² 1 Cor. x. 22. Nic. de Lyra says: 'Hoc modo dicitur Deus zelotes quia non vult quod homo fornicetur cum diis alienis per idololatriam.'

and of His righteous claim on all life. The tremendous discipline to which Israel itself was subjected is in itself a crucial instance of the way in which that claim vindicates itself. Whatever happened to God's ancient people befell them, as we know, *by way of example*, and was written *for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages are come*.¹ The experience of the Hebrew people signally illustrates that 'exquisite justice' with which Almighty God visits national as well as personal sin. The generations of men are knit together, and the consequences of wrongdoing slowly but surely come to maturity. The sins of the fathers are visited upon the children *unto the third and fourth generation*.² In Israel's case the judgment which the nation incurred by its apostasy and idolatry actually fell upon a generation which had earnestly set itself to *seek Jehovah*. The sins of Manasseh were expiated by the subjects of Josiah and his successors. As the Jewish proverb expressed it, *The fathers have eaten sour grapes and the children's teeth are set on edge*.³ As a doctrine this adage was difficult to understand, but as the statement of a fact it could not be gainsaid. History has verified it again and again. Forgetfulness of God at one period of a nation's history issues in neglect or violation of social righteousness which ultimately bears fruit in revolution, in national weakness and disaster, in the overthrow of dynasties and the decline of empires.

There are many causes at work which tend to the decay of godly fear. Of our time, as of his own, Bishop Butler

¹ 1 Cor. x. 11.

² Perhaps (as Nic. de Lyra and Hugo de S. Victore suggest) 'quia usque ad tot generationes vident aliquando mali pueros ex eis exeuntes.'

³ Ezek. xviii. 2.

might well have said: 'There is in this age a certain fearlessness.' The seeming stability of our civilization has been a snare: (how wise are the words of the Psalmist, *Because they have no changes therefore they fear not God*¹); and materialism has become the practical creed of multitudes in every class of European society. The disappearance of the sense of sin, and its consequence, the waning of religion, is due to forgetfulness of God and of His judgments. The mutual suspicion and contempt that embitters the relations between labour and capital; the absence of the sense of responsibility for others; the low ideals of life which pervade every class—all these have their root in forgetfulness of God. The thought of God, of His kingdom, of His righteous will, of His exact justice, must again become a restraining and an inspiring force in human life if modern civilization is to be stable and progressive. There is, as we have already seen, a practical atheism which acknowledges with lip-service the existence and the claim of God, but in works denies Him: in matters of everyday business ignores His will: and in personal behaviour dishonours His name.

In the New Testament the duty of holy fear is based upon the truth of the divine Fatherhood. It is because we *call upon Him as Father, Who without respect of persons judgeth according to every man's work*, that we are to *pass the time of our sojourning in fear*.² God is the Heavenly Father of men, but also the righteous and merciful Judge of all, manifesting His mercy in the very fact that He rewardeth *every*

¹ Ps. lv. 19 (A.V.). See Dr. Kay's comment: 'Their theory that all things continue as they were from the beginning (2 Pet. iii. 4) seems confirmed by their own experience. They have had one unvarying stream of prosperity which appears to them to be entirely independent of any personal Ruler of the world.'

² 1 Pet. i. 17.

*man according to His work.*¹ He loves men with an impartial love, and wilfully to offend Him is to fall into the hands of a justly offended Father. True strength of character can spring from no other root than this sacred dread of all offence, this 'bowed apprehension of His majesty' which is the mark of His children. Nor can any one who loves his country watch without deep anxiety that gradual disappearance of the thought of God which lies at the root of our manifold social evils. What is lacking in our generation, in spite of its high level of intellectual ability, its gifts of culture, its easy tolerance and its capacity for refined pleasure, is the seriousness which springs from a just sense of the greatness of God, the awfulness of life and its possibilities, the inexorable sternness of the claim of Christ. Life can only be strenuous and fruitful, in proportion as it is overshadowed and solemnized by the fear of God.

One example is worth many precepts, and may fitly illustrate the temper which the second commandment seems to enjoin. Of the late John Bright it was written by one who knew him intimately: 'There was a noble austerity in him, . . . the result, I think, in part of a noble moral austerity in his conception of God. The reverence with which it was his habit to speak of God was very impressive. It was apparent that he had known the fear—the fear in which there is no terror, and which instead of paralysing the soul, nerves it to the highest exertion of its moral energy and to the most courageous endurance—the fear which has filled the hearts of prophets and saints when in solitary hours they have seen the glory of God and have learnt that God is always near. To him God was infinitely great and august; the will of God was one with the eternal law of

¹ Ps. lxii. 12 (P.B.).

righteousness, commanding obedience and submission, whatever may be the cost : not to be resisted, not to be forgotten, either by individual men or nations, except at their infinite peril.' ¹

The second commandment has a special message for an age in which men are seldom kindled to fiery moral passion of any kind. It makes mention of that attribute in Almighty God which the modern mind finds it difficult to realize : hatred of evil, *wrath revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men.*² The deepest and most enduring element in the divine nature is lovingkindness. He sheweth *mercy unto thousands of them that love Him and keep His commandments.*³ But the wrath of God is a tremendous reality, manifested from time to time in the events of human history ; in the case of His chosen who go astray from Him through weakness or error, it is the heat of jealousy—of outraged love ; in the case of them that hate Him—who refuse to have God in their knowledge—it is a *fierceness of fire which shall devour the adversaries.* We need to seek *grace whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear,* for this very reason that *our God is a consuming fire.*⁴

2. The other great moral duty implied in the second commandment is that of honouring God with a worship worthy of His nature : a worship offered *in spirit and in truth.* The words remind us that worship has two aspects.

¹ The late Dr. R. W. Dale in *Contemporary Review* for May, 1889. Cp. the same writer's book *The Atonement*, pp. 339-342, and J. H. Newman, *Parochial and Plain Sermons*, vol. ii. no. 23.

² Rom. i. 18.

³ Grotius : '*In millia, ostendens quanto fit in benefaciendo Deus quam in puniendo largior.*' Barrow : 'By a vast proportion the expressions of God's mercy do exceed those of justice.'

⁴ Heb. x. 27 ; xii. 28, 29 ; cp. Deut. iv. 24.

On the one hand it is an act of self-expression, or self-oblation, an uplifting of all our faculties heavenward in order that with our entire personality we may hold communion with the Father. On the other hand, acceptable worship implies a clear and vivid conception of its object. It must respond to the actual self-revelation of God. Christian worship in the strict sense is that which recognizes in Jesus Christ a complete and satisfying manifestation of Deity. Accordingly it has its outward form and expression, inasmuch as the Lord of Glory Himself was manifested in flesh, and used material things as the veil and vehicle of spiritual gifts. The Church is the embodiment upon earth of the risen Saviour, and its worship must needs express and represent what He is: He in Whom body and spirit are bound together in perfect and endless unity, and find their joint consecration.¹

Worship is the concentration of all human faculties on God. It is spiritual in so far as the spirit in man—that which constitutes the central element in his personality, that by which he holds communion with his Creator—presents and uplifts all the different elements of his nature to God: reason, memory, affection and desire. It was *through* His *eternal spirit* that the Holy One of God *offered Himself without blemish to God*.² It is the spirit which is, so to speak, the high priest of man's oblation, the spirit which devotes itself to the divine service, the spirit which responds to the will of God. Thus the essential act of worship belongs to the *will*, to the central self, the spirit, identifying itself wholly and gladly with the will of God, and laying at His feet all the elements of its being. Adoration, penitence,

¹ Cp. Milligan, *The Resurrection of Our Lord*, p. 214.

² Heb. ix. 14.

devotion—these imply the surrender of the inmost self to God. ‘Here we offer and present unto Thee, O Lord, ourselves, our souls and bodies, to be a reasonable, holy and lively sacrifice unto Thee.’¹

But worship cannot be independent of outward form, for we have bodies as well as spirits, and perfect worship implies the dedication to God of every part of our complex nature. To Christ the Body was the instrument of a dedicated spirit, a filial will; and the Incarnation has for ever consecrated the employment of material and visible things for spiritual purposes. The body has its part to take in worship, and the soul may well require outward helps to kindle and sustain its love, praise and adoration. Whatever ministers to the spirit of worship through an appeal to the senses; whatever stirs and elevates the heart or enables the mind to realize heavenly realities, is to be gladly welcomed and used. The true spirituality of worship is certainly not secured by entire bareness, or by absence of symbolism. But the history of the Church is full of warnings that æsthetic aids to worship may be perverted or abused. Worship is apt to be materialized by over-elaboration of its outward side, and the sense of beauty must not be appealed to at the expense of higher and nobler faculties. The test of all ceremonies or symbols is the degree in which they minister effectively to the central purpose of worship,—the dedication of self to God. In other words, the test is

¹ Cp. Lactantius, *de vero cultu*, vi.: ‘Hic verus est cultus in quo mens colentis seipsam Deo immaculatam victimam sistit.’ Also Card. Franzelin: ‘Obligatio cultus interni continetur in ipsa essentiali relatione creaturæ rationalis ad Deum. Nititur totus cultus divinus tanquam fundamento in religiosa intellectus agnitione et voluntatis submissione erga Deum’ (quoted by Gold, *Sacrificial Worship*, p. 2).

‘edification.’ ‘Men are edified,’ says Hooker, ‘when either their understanding is taught somewhat whereof in such actions it behoveth all men to consider, or when their hearts are moved with any affection suitable thereunto; when their minds are in any sort stirred up unto that reverence, devotion, attention and due regard, which in those cases seemeth requisite.’¹ We are to judge of all aids to devotion according as they help or hinder the power of holding communion with God *in spirit and in truth*. Experience seems to teach us that the accessories of worship, if they absorb too much thought and attention, are apt to make worship itself barren and mechanical, and even to choke the spirit of prayer; and it is perhaps true that one test of spiritual advance is a growing independence of external aids to devotion. As Whittier sings:—

No picture to my aid I call,
 I shape no image in my prayer;
 I only know in Him is all
 Of life and beauty everywhere,
 Eternal goodness here and there!

I know He is and what He is,
 Whose one great purpose is the good
 Of all. I rest my soul on His
 Immortal Love and Fatherhood,
 And trust Him as His children should.

For worship is not so much an occasional or isolated act as an habitual temper or spirit. It is the free and spontaneous self-dedication of living men to the service of the living God Who, because He is spirit, is everywhere present and in all His ways and works to be adored. This reflection should lead us to move among His creatures in the spirit of worshippers. The thought of His providence invests all

¹ *Eccl. Pol.* iv. 1. 3.

things, however trivial, with a certain interest and significance. Reverence for nature, for animal life, above all for humanity, is implied in the spirit of worship. 'God dwells in every human being,' says William Channing, in his noble discourse on 'Worship,' 'more intimately than in the outward creation. The voice of God comes to us in the ocean, the thunder, the whirlwind ; but how much more of God is there in His inward voice, in the intuitions of reason, in the rebukes of conscience, in the whispers of the Holy Spirit. I would have you see God in the awful mountain and the tranquil valley ; but more, much more, in the clear judgment, the moral energy, the disinterested purpose, the pious gratitude, the immortal hope of a good man. Go forth from this house to worship God by reverencing the human soul as His chosen sanctuary.' Channing proceeds to remind his hearers that the highest worship ever offered on earth was that of Christ Himself. He worshipped God in the perfect sense of the word when He stooped to be amongst men *as one that serveth* ; when He ministered by deeds of mercy to their needs ; when He taught them their true dignity as children of God ; when He toiled and suffered to bring them healing and help ; when He offered Himself, His entire humanity, without blemish and with perfect devotion, to His heavenly Father.

III

‘Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain ;
for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh His name in
vain.’

CHAPTER V

THE THIRD COMMANDMENT

THE teaching of the first two commandments virtually comprises that of the whole Decalogue. The fulfilment of duty to our neighbour is included in that of duty to God ; for *the great and first* commandment is love, and love is the fulfilling of the law. To ' have ' God—to possess Him in any vital sense—implies obedience to His will and imitation of His impartial lovingkindness towards man.

As the first commandment makes mention of the redemptive grace of God, and bases upon it the law of *devotion* or love ; as the second recalls His jealousy, His exclusive claim, and so inculcates the duty of *holy fear* ; so the third forbids any profane or careless use of His *Name*. It contains, in a word, the law of *reverence*. The Name of God means the self-revelation of the divine essence. In this sense it was solemnly proclaimed to Moses.¹ *Nobis*, says Tertullian, *in Filio revelatum est*. The Incarnation brought God near to man, and in so doing hallowed all common duties, all material things, all human relationships. *Thy name also is so nigh, and that do Thy wondrous works declare*.² The sense of mystery must needs check the confidence with which we speak of the ways and words and works of God. Glib and shallow expositions of truth, unreal professions, unmeaning promises, the lip-service of mechanical and

¹ Exod. xxxiv. 6.

² Ps. lxxv. 2 (P.B.).

formal worship—all these at once occur to us as implying dishonour to the Name of God. For the literal meaning of the precept seems to be ‘Thou shalt not take up’ (or ‘upon thy lips’) ‘the Name of Jehovah thy God for vanity.’¹ Probably this prohibits in the first instance false swearing, i.e. calling upon God as witness to a falsehood.² But it certainly includes also the use of the divine Name for any idle, frivolous or insincere purpose.³ As the Name of God corresponds to the supreme Reality (τὸ ὄντως ὄν) and is the revelation of *Him that is true*, so the commandment seems further to imply the duty of truthfulness. We must, as Philo says, in the first instance so speak the truth that our words may be regarded as equivalent to our oath; and in the next place faithfully observe an oath when made. Truthfulness in speech is the outcome and symbol of reverence in spirit.

The sacredness of speech follows, in fact, from the sacredness of Christian life. We are struck in reading the Apostolic writings by the lofty language employed to describe the *status* of Christians who have been brought near to God by the Blood of Christ. They dwell, and are enthroned with Christ, in heavenly places. *They are come unto Mount Zion and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem.* They live and move and have their being *in Christ*. Their bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit. They live under the shadow of the throne of God, watched and guided by His eye, knit together in a divine society. They are *called to be saints, partakers of a heavenly calling*, citizens of a heavenly State. Already the servants of God tread the golden streets

¹ ἐπὶ ματαιῷ, LXX. εἰς εἰκῇ (temere), Aquila.

² So Philo. Cp. Lev. xix. 12.

³ See Driver, on *Exodus* xx. 7.

of the new Jerusalem and walk in the light of the glory of God.¹ For Christian believers the whole of life is solemnized by the recollection of God, not as an absent Ruler, but as a living Presence besetting them behind and before, searching their hearts, and judging all their ways. They are called to walk with the sincerity, the seriousness, the tranquillity, the trustfulness, of those who realize that they live beneath the eye of God.²

The gift of speech, then, has a sacred function to fulfil in human life, and is to be controlled by a constant sense of accountability to One Who is the unseen Witness of the words and deeds of men.

Further, we may recall the mysterious title given to our Lord by St. John. The title 'Logos,' 'Word,' has a long history, and is charged with far-reaching associations. But for the ordinary Christian its significance seems simple: in Christ the Word, God 'spake' to man, uttered His thought, manifested His mind and will, and in so doing fulfilled His age-long promises. The Word was made flesh in order to manifest *the truth of God*³; in Him, *how many soever be the promises of God, in Him is the yea*.⁴ In Him God reveals Himself as faithful, shows Himself true to His promise and His purpose. It is significant that St. Paul in defending himself from a charge of fickleness and inconsistency reminds the Corinthians that anything like double dealing is morally impossible for one who is commissioned to proclaim the faithfulness of God. *God is true and Christians are in Him*

¹ See Milligan, *The Book of Revelation* (in *The Expositor's Bible*), pp. 373-4.

² Cyprian, *de orat. Dominica*, 4: 'Sciamus Deum ubique esse praesentem, audire omnes et videre et maiestatis suae plenitudine in abdita quoque et occulta penetrare. . . . Deus non vocis, sed cordis auditor est.'

³ See Rom. xv. 8.

⁴ 2 Cor. i. 18.

that is true. They are called, therefore, to keep in view the constancy of the divine character, reflected alike in the uniform order of nature and in the mysteries of grace. Our power of speech is sacred because, in a certain manner and degree, it has its eternal counterpart in Almighty God. Just as the divine Word reveals the very nature of God, so human speech must reveal the real thought of the heart. It must be sincere: not merely unmeaning, trivial, idle and vain.¹

We are naturally led at this point to consider our Lord's own expansion of the third commandment in the Sermon on the Mount and elsewhere.² We notice how He enjoins directness and simplicity in speech. *Let your speech be Yea yea, Nay nay, and whatsoever is more than these is of the evil one:* is the outcome, in other words, of the sinfulness which impels people to make stubborn and violent assertions; arises from anger, irritability, insincerity, corruptness or distortion of mind. So again Christ tells us that *every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment.* He condemns all purposeless and unprofitable speech, what St. Paul calls *corrupt* (or, *rotten*) *communication*, which can serve no purpose, nor in any way edify the hearer³: the use of speech which is without grace, or salt, or fruitfulness. The teaching of the New Testament is to the effect that speech and action alike are to become more and more full of purpose, edifying others as need may require. The good man will endeavour to *guide*

¹ Augustine, *serm.* ix., 'de decem chordis' explains 'in vanum accipere Nomen Dei' as meaning 'creaturam putare Filium Dei, quia omnis creatura *vanitati* subjecta est.' Elsewhere he takes the first three commandments as referring to Father (1 and 2), Son (3) and Holy Ghost (4). (*Ep. lv. ad Januarium*, 20.)

² Matt. v. 33-37; xii. 35 foll.; xv. 11.

³ Eph. iv. 29. Cp. Col. iv. 6.

his words with discretion,¹ not neglecting the grace of refinement, kindliness, wit and humour, as occasion may require or suggest, but bringing forth in all his utterance *good things out of his good treasure*; and never omitting in his use of speech the salt by which it should be seasoned—the steadfast desire and intention of doing good.

We may consider some practical duties connected with the use of speech and suggested by the commandment.

1. There is, of course, such a thing as the right use of an oath, though, as Augustine points out, it is a necessary concession to human infirmity and is not in itself good or desirable.² An oath is in its simplest aspect a mode of acknowledging the truth of God's omnipresence; a way of declaring that what we say, we utter with a solemn consciousness that He hears us, and that our word may be accepted as true in His sight.³ The object of an oath is to banish untruth, but in an ideal, that is a perfectly Christian community, simple speech ought to suffice. Quakers and others who object to taking the oath in a court of justice are right in principle. Our Lord expressly says, *Swear not at all*. But He Himself submitted on one momentous occasion to being put upon His oath, and Christians could not consistently decline to do that which, as things actually are, promotes the end of justice and testifies to the supreme importance of truth. The primary aim of the commandment is to prohibit perjury, a dangerous crime which there are some reasons for believing to be now more frequent in England than was formerly the case.⁴ The righteous employment

¹ Ps. cxii. 5 : *οἰκονομήσει τοὺς λόγους αὐτοῦ ἐν κρίσει*. LXX. (The Heb. seems to mean : 'Will direct, or sustain, his affairs with equity.')

² Aug. *de serm. in monte*, i. 17.

³ Aug. *loc. cit.* : 'Jurat qui adhibet testem Deum.

⁴ Among the Jews the taking of an oath was a religious

of the oath is well described by Jeremiah in the words: *Thou shalt swear, As the Lord liveth, in truth, in judgment and in righteousness.*¹ It serves a great and important social purpose, but it is essentially an act of homage rendered to Almighty God Himself.²

What our Lord seems to censure in St. Matthew xxiii. 16 foll. is the false reverence which is content with unreal distinctions and subterfuges. A perfect reverence would suggest the complete abstention from oaths, as He implies in the Sermon on the Mount (v. 34).³ Inasmuch as men live, and move, and have their being *in Him Who is true*, they need to be reminded that truthfulness is a duty they owe not so much to their neighbours and to human society at large, as to God Himself. 'They that lie,' says an ancient writer, 'defraud the Lord.' That nature which has God for its end and law is under an obligation to abide in the truth and by sincerity in speech and action to reflect the simplicity of Him in Whose image man is made. A beautiful prayer in the Nestorian Liturgy contains words which illustrate this truth:—

'The tongues that have cried Holy: do Thou dispose to speak truth.

The feet that have walked within the church: make them to walk in the land of light.'

act. See Deut. vi. 13; x. 20. Their dread of taking *the Name* (Lev. xxiv. 11) upon their lips was a safeguard of reverence. Grotius refers to the belief among the heathen that God specially punished perjury. See such passages as Hesiod, *Opera*, 280; Hdtus. vi. 86 (the story of Glaucus); Tibull. *Eleg.* i. 3. 4.

¹ Jer. iv. 2 (contrast v. 2).

² 'It expresseth the pious persuasion we have concerning God's chief attributes and prerogatives; of His omnipresence and omniscience, extending to the knowledge of our most inward thoughts and secret purposes.' Barrow.

³ Cp. Prof. A. G. Hogg, *Christ's Message of the Kingdom*, p. 140.

It is by trustworthiness and fidelity in word and deed that human character reflects the persistence, and dependableness of the divine nature. In the Old Testament God is often described as *the Rock*. He deals with men by rule and measure—by the standard of His own perfect righteousness. He requites them according to their deeds; He fulfils exactly both His threats and His promises; He is ever true to the character which He has already manifested in history. Hence trustworthiness is a vital element in human virtue; and we realize how unworthy of a consistent Christian is breach of faith, rashness to make and failure to fulfil promises and engagements, facile assent out of politeness or some less worthy motive to what is said by others—what the Romans called *assentatio*.¹

Much has been written about the need of governing the tongue.² St. James speaks as if the use of the faculty of speech was the great school of self-control.³ Bishop Butler says that what St. James has in mind is mere talkativeness, 'a disposition to be talking with very little or no regard to, or thought of doing, either good or harm.' Accordingly we may think that the third commandment implicitly prohibits all misuse of speech: exaggeration, boasting, murmuring, heedless condemnation of persons or actions, every wrong form of self-assertion, every breach of charity.

2. As to profane swearing it is needless to say more than a word. It is a sadly common offence in England, even among children. At one time it was more characteristic of the rich and well-to-do than it probably is nowadays.

¹ Turretin: 'Fidem servare est actus veritatis, justitiae et fidelitatis,' etc.

² See especially Bp. Butler's *Sermons*, No. iv., on this subject

³ Jas. iii.

Dr. Dale attributes this to a change of taste and opinion in society itself, and he justly observes that there is something appalling in the thought 'that we have a greater dread of violating the conventional maxims of good society than of transgressing the laws of God. When profanity was only a sin against God, it was a common offence; it has disappeared since it became vulgar.'¹ Akin to profane swearing is foul, unclean speech, *filthy communication*, as St. Paul calls it. This is always and everywhere hateful, and there is nothing which is capable of making life such a hell upon earth. *The tongue*, says St. James, *is a fire*. Many are the victims of the loose and foul talk that goes on in workshops, mess-rooms of ships, smoking-rooms of clubs and country houses, common lodging-houses. The pollution of memory and imagination dates with some from the days of boyhood, and bears fruit in life-long defilement of imagination and memory. This, again, is a vice characteristic of the heathen *that know not God*. It springs from forgetfulness of God's all-seeing eye, penetrating those recesses of the heart from which such evils spring, and in which they must be overcome.² A want of reverence gives birth to all those sins of the tongue mentioned by St. Paul in Ephesians v. 4. Even a limited experience of life serves to teach us how incalculable is the moral havoc wrought by them: *how much wood is kindled by how small a fire!*³ Nor is it to be forgotten that reverence is due to the image of God in man. Plato anticipated Juvenal's great saying when he pointed out that the young could only be taught reverence if elders were careful to show their respect for the young by studiously

¹ *The Ten Commandments*, pp. 71, 72.

² Mark vii. 21.

³ Jas. iii. 5.

guarding them from the sight or hearing of anything shameful.¹

3. Two other ways in which this commandment is often broken may be noticed. The duty it inculcates is, as we have seen, that of reverence. It accordingly seems to regulate our entire behaviour in regard to what is sacred : God's Name, His written Word, His Church, His appointed ministers, His holy day, His ordinances of worship, His sacraments. Hence arises the need of restraining the habit of speaking lightly or in jest of things sacred and venerable. Nothing is more common than the misuse of Scripture—light quotation of its language or allusion to its contents. Nothing is more certain to destroy the spirit of reverence. Indeed, a profane jest, heard or repeated, often clings to the memory for life. In the present day there is urgent need to quicken in men's minds, or to restore if lost, a serious regard for Holy Scripture. It is to be feared that the Bible is a greatly neglected book, and by some is even supposed to be antiquated and discredited by the advance of modern knowledge and criticism. It is much easier to criticize the Bible than to do it justice. The record of revelation is wide as the universe and deep as the divine counsels and purposes.² It is related of Savonarola that by force of long study of the Bible he had ceased to regard it as a book. 'It was a world ; a living, speaking, infinite world in which the past, present and future were all revealed to him.' His own advice to students of Scripture was that

¹ Juv. *Sat.* xiv. 47 : 'Maxima debetur puero reverentia,' with J. E. B. Mayor's note.

² Aug. *de utilitate credendi*, iv. well says : 'Sunt ibi quaedam quae suboffendant animos ignaros et negligentes sui. . . *Populariter* accusari possunt : defendi autem populariter propter mysteria quae his continentur, non a multis admodum possunt.'

they should prepare themselves for study of the Word by purity of heart, by long practice of charity, by raising their thoughts above earthly things ; ' for we may not comprehend this book by the intellect alone, but must also bring our heart and soul to the task. Thus only can we enter without peril into this infinite world of the holy Scriptures and obtain the light needed for our salvation.' ¹

4. Another form of sin against the third commandment is the habit of unrestrained criticism. ' We take God's name in vain assuredly when we scoff at anything which either is good or tries to be ; when we sit and criticize those who are labouring to make the world better, when we laugh at their failures and misrepresent their motives. There is a growing habit of sneering at imperfection, of cheapening the moral currency by exposing the inconsistencies of the good. . . . It sits in that worst of all seats that a man can occupy—the seat of the scornful.' ² In an age of widespread, but very defective, education, the faculty of criticism naturally and rightly receives a great impetus ; but wisdom is a plant of slow growth, and is essentially a moral rather than an intellectual quality. It implies a certain character—a state of the heart and will. It is the outcome of a right life, and its judgments are according to the inner truth, not the external appearance, of things. Hence it is what St. James describes it to be *pure, peaceable, gentle, easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits.* ³ It is tender to ignorance, and alive to the pathos of human strivings and failures. It has learned gentleness through personal experience of the stress and strain of moral conflict ; it takes account of opportunities

¹ Villari, *Life of Savonarola* [Eng. tr.] vol. i., 118–120.

² R. Eyton, *The Ten Commandments*, p. 51. ³ Jas. iii. 17.

and tendencies. It recognizes the irony of circumstance : the limitations of even the noblest and strongest character : the disparity between intention and fulfilment, purpose and performance. It has learnt the meaning of the apostolic precept, *Honour all men*.¹ Our Lord was careful to respect the personality of men, and by treating them as moral and spiritual beings taught them self-reverence. He taught them that they were God's children, and treated them as His brethren. He made friends even of the out-cast and sinful. He spoke of the fickle and thoughtless multitudes always with compassion, never with disdain. 'Towards no human being does He shew contempt.'² He taught by example and precept the supreme place of mercifulness in human perfection ; and His most solemn warnings are addressed to those who made their own standard of conduct the measure by which they judged their fellow-men ; who *trusted in themselves that they were righteous and set all others at nought*.³

The third commandment, like the second, closes with a warning, in view of the wide prevalence among men of sins of speech. *The tongue can no man tame*, says St. James. *Who is he*, asks the Hebrew sage, *that hath not offended with his tongue ?*⁴ Our Lord traces the evil to its source when He says : *Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. From within, out of the heart proceed . . . railing, pride, foolishness*.⁵ He thus warns men to be watchful against anger, vanity, discontent, uncleanness, division of mind, which bear such baneful fruit in sins of speech. He seems also to remind us both by precept and example of the virtue

¹ 1 Pet. ii. 17.

² Latham, *Pastor Pastorum*, p. 204.

³ Luke xviii. 9.

⁴ Eccclus. xix. 16.

⁵ Matt. xii. 34 ; Luke vi. 45 ; Mark vii. 22.

of silence. Bishop Butler, alluding to the text, 'There is a time to speak and a time to keep silence,' drily observes that 'One meets with people in the world who seem never to have made the last of these observations.' The wise man is *swift to hear and slow to speak*.¹ In these days of scant reflection and much speaking we may well ponder the lesson to be learned both from our Lord's sacred reserve in teaching, and from His habit of seeking in solitude new strength and inspiration for the fulfilment of His mission. Nor must we ever forget that we live and walk in the presence of One Who, whatever may be the judgment of men concerning our words, will not hold us guiltless if by unreal, idle, false, unjust or unclean speech we dishonour His Name ; or if while confessing Him with our lips, we deny Him in our hearts and in our lives. *Domine, in lumine vultus tui ambulabunt, et in nomine tuo exsultabunt tota die.*

¹ Jas. i. 19.

IV

‘Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labour and do all thy work : but the seventh day is a Sabbath unto the Lord thy God : in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates : for in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day : wherefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day, and hallowed it.’

CHAPTER VI

THE FOURTH COMMANDMENT

IN the case of this precept, as in that of divorce, our Lord points us back to what was in the beginning. *The Sabbath*, He says, *was made for man*.¹ The Jews were taught to observe the seventh day on the ground that on that day the great Creator had rested from all His work. The main idea which they connected with it was that of cessation from labour. It was, in fact, a new point of view, a new principle, that was involved in Christ's reference to the Sabbath, a principle which He not merely affirmed in words but illustrated in act when He performed works of mercy on the Sabbath day and by so doing laid Himself open to the charge of violating its sanctity.² But the idea that the ordinance of the Sabbath originally had respect to the needs of man was to some extent implied in the form of the commandment as given in Deuteronomy v. The Israelites are there enjoined to 'remember' on the Sabbath day the bondage of Egypt and the deliverance which laid the foundation of their nationality. It was to be a day of thanksgiving and a day of bounty, in the benefits of which servants and strangers and dumb animals were to duly participate.³ It is probable that this conception of Sabbath observance was earlier than the idea that underlies the precept in

¹ Mark ii. 27. ² Cp. John v. 16; Luke xiv. 16.

³ Cp. Deut. xv. 12-18.

Exodus xx. So at least we may gather from some references to the Sabbath in the prophecy of Amos. It appears from Amos viii. 4 foll. that the institution was already threatened, as it has often been since, by the worldliness and greed of what we should now call the 'commercial' spirit. By enforcing the cessation of work, the Sabbath protected the interests of the poor and helpless, the heavy-laden and the oppressed. 'The interests of the Sabbath,' it would appear from this passage, 'are the interests of the poor: the enemies of the Sabbath are the enemies of the poor.'¹ That this view of the Sabbath as a day of bounty and brotherly kindness long survived and was perhaps never entirely forgotten, we may gather from such a passage as Isaiah lviii., which describes the true spirit in which days, whether of fasting or festival, should be observed.

In our Lord's time, Pharisaism had to a great extent robbed the Sabbath of its higher and nobler significance. The prohibition of work on the seventh day had been developed to an almost incredible point. No less than thirty-nine different kinds of work were forbidden, and these had many subdivisions. It was unlawful even to wipe an open wound or to stop with wax a leaking cask. In plucking the ears of corn as they passed through the wheat-fields, Christ's disciples were guilty of two offences: for plucking the ears came under the head of 'reaping,' which was, of course, prohibited, and rubbing them in the hands was a form of 'sifting' or 'threshing.'² Gradually, however,

¹ G. A. Smith, *The Book of the Twelve Apostles*, i. 183. He remarks that 'all this illustrates our Saviour's saying, that *the Sabbath was made for man*.'

² See more in Schürer, *Hist. of the Jewish People in the Time of Christ*, § 28; Edersheim, *Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, ii. 52, etc., and appendix xvii. See also Montefiore, *Hibbert Lectures*, no. ix., pp. 504 foll.

the Jews seem to have risen to a more intelligent view of the meaning of the day. If work was forbidden, it was at least not a day of idleness or gloom. In medieval times the Sabbath came to be regarded not as a burden but as a delight : a day of rest and tranquil joy, when the persecuted Jew could again look heavenward and feel that he was a son of the covenant, a child of God. The Sabbath was celebrated in many hymns as a day of peace and delight ; tender names were applied to it : ' Queen ' or ' Bride Sabbath,' ' Holy, dear, beloved Sabbath.' It was supposed to be the day to which the text applied, *The blessing of the Lord it maketh rich and He addeth no sorrow with it.*¹

In laying down the principle, therefore, that the Sabbath was made for man, our Lord was perhaps appealing to a tradition which had never entirely disappeared. But we must think of His utterance as confirming an eternal principle—a principle attested by the Law of Nature which underlies the commandment : the moral duty of setting apart a definite time for the worship of God : cessation of work for purposes of devotion. The observance of the seventh day was the temporal form—the ceremonial limitation—in and under which a moral principle was enshrined² : the broad principle that the divine claim extends to the whole of life, and that this claim is to be acknowledged by dedication of a fixed portion of time to the special service of God.

The Christian observance of Sunday manifestly does

¹ Prov. x. 22.

² As Turretin points out, the precept is a mixed one—partly moral, partly ceremonial : ceremonial in respect of the particular determination of a particular time (the seventh day). This element in the commandment is unessential. Cp. Nic. de Lyra : ' Morale est quantum ad hoc quod homo tenetur *vacare divinis*.'

not rest upon the letter of the fourth commandment, but upon the principle which it represents. For more than a century the Christian Church religiously observed the Sabbath as well as the first day of the week, possibly out of deference to Jewish converts, who could not altogether abandon the religious habits in which they had been nurtured. But at an early period, Christian teachers found it necessary to insist that the observance of the day in the Jewish manner was to be avoided as a Judaizing reaction.¹ 'No longer keep Sabbath,' writes Ignatius, 'but live in accordance with the spirit of the Lord's Day.' 'Refrain,' says St. Cyril of Jerusalem to his catechumens, 'from all observance of sabbaths.'² The attempt indeed to combine the Jewish with the Christian custom was expressly condemned by the council of Laodicea (363), and is spoken of by Gregory the Great as a device of anti-Christ. The observance of the Christian Sunday rests upon a different basis and appeals to a different motive.³ Our Lord's resurrection marked out the first day of the week as a day of renewal and consecration; restored to it a heavenly character and use. The Sabbath had been a memorial of the creation: the first day of the week was intended to keep in remembrance the new creation—the restoration of all things in Christ. Further, the custom of abstinence from work was never the primary and leading feature of the

¹ See Bingham, *Antiquities of the Christian Church*, bk. xx., ch. 3.

² Ignat. *ad Magnesios*, ix.; Cyr. Hieros. *catech. illum.* iv. 37.

³ Cp. Bp. Pearson, *Exposition of the Creed*, art. v.: 'The obligation of the day [the Sabbath] died and was buried with Him, but in a manner by a diurnal transmutation revived again at His resurrection. Well might that day which carried with it a remembrance of that great deliverance from the Egyptian servitude, resign all the sanctity or solemnity due unto it, when that morning once appeared upon which a far greater redemption was confirmed.'

Christian Sunday. For some three centuries there seems to have been no cessation of *work* on Sundays; men were enjoined *if possible* to abstain from labour in order that they might have more leisure for the real function of the day—the solemn worship of God. We must not forget, however, that our Lord rose from the dead on a *working day*: as if to teach us that man's true destiny is to be achieved through active use of all his faculties, and that the life of the world to come involves the intensification of all energies, whether bodily or spiritual. The heaven for which we look is a sphere of work, but work noble and satisfying in quality, unspoiled by sordid motive or bondage of routine, unhindered by weakness, and crowned with eternal joy. *His servants shall serve Him*. The Jews had come to regard the Sabbath almost exclusively as the day on which the Creator had rested from His work. Our Lord incidentally corrected what was partial or mistaken in this conception, partly by teaching that the Sabbath was *made for man*; partly by pointing to His own example, *My Father worketh hitherto and I work*; partly also by the very fact that He used the Sabbath as an occasion for doing deeds of lovingkindness and compassion.

For Christians, the fourth commandment embodies, as we have seen, a far-reaching principle. The institution of special seasons of devotion illustrates a leading idea of the Bible—the idea of election, separation, consecration. The claim of God upon the whole of life was to be recognized by the dedication of a portion as symbolizing that of the whole.¹ The observance of Sunday is virtually our acknowledgment that our time, as well as our substance, belongs to God. Without it, His claim might be forgotten

¹ Cp. Hooker, *Eccl. Pol.* v. 70, 71.

or ignored. Hence the commandment begins significantly with the word *Remember*. Its central thought is that of worship ; but since the idea of worship is a comprehensive one, the precept makes mention of other essential elements in that true life of man which consists in the service of God.

1. The commandment speaks first of *work* : it re-enacts the primeval law *In the sweat of thy face thou shalt eat bread*. Our Lord accepts and hallows in His own person the law of labour. He was Himself a worker. The word 'work' was constantly on His lips. He felt the burden and pressure of constraint. *I must work the works of Him that sent me. I must be about my Father's business. I must preach. The Son of Man must be lifted up*. Nor do we find Him speaking of work as if it was invariably pleasurable or brought 'its own reward.' Rather it is a task or discipline, needful for the perfecting of character and the purifying of the springs of life. We may remember, too, how in His parables Christ seems to have His eye, so to speak, on every type of industry—the labour of the field and of the vineyard ; of the farm and of the pasture ; the toil of the fisherman, of the busy housewife, of the servant in the great household, of the merchant and the employer of labour.

There is something in this thought that specially appeals to the English mind. Emerson, writing in 1847, speaks of the English as 'a nation of labourers.' 'I suppose,' he adds, 'no people have such thoroughness ; from highest to lowest every man meaning to be master of his craft.' Indeed, 'intemperate labour' has been regarded as a besetting sin of the Anglo-Saxon race ; and legislation has for some sixty or seventy years past been largely directed towards the *restriction* of labour in the case of women, children and other defenceless persons.

Work is, in short, a service which each man owes to God, to society and to himself. The labour problem, which in modern times dominates all other questions, must be regarded *from above*, in the light of that relationship of man to God, to himself and to his fellow, which Christ revealed. Work, to satisfy the Gospel conception of it, must be of a kind that guards and fosters the self-respect of the worker, that elevates, trains and expands his nature, that brings him a sense of moral satisfaction. But a vast proportion of the labour of men in the modern industrial community is of the sort which, so far from uplifting the toiler, crushes and degrades him. Under modern conditions we are confronted by the picture of 'a world on which work settles down as a blight, a shadow, a curse'; in which work is for vast masses of the population excessive, monotonous, exhausting; robbing the labourer of aspiration, of hope, of all that tends to the perfection of his manhood. The task of the State in this regard is plain. It must endeavour, by fixing (at least, in certain forms of industry) a standard wage, by shortening the hours of toil, and by 'reducing Sunday labour to the *minimum* consistent with the claims of necessity and mercy'¹ to secure for the toiler what he chiefly needs: a fair chance of self-expansion, an opportunity to develop other sides of his nature—his family affections, his intelligence, his sense of beauty, his powers of enjoyment, his spiritual faculties. The Gospel of Christ, in proclaiming the dignity of labour, strikes at the root of those terrible evils to which we have just referred; it also passes a just condemnation upon those who on any pretext evade the law of work; who are content to be idle while

¹ This is one of the aims and objects of the *Imperial Sunday Alliance and Sunday Lay Movement*, respecting which information may be obtained at the Office, 1, Albemarle Street, London, W.

multitudes are toiling without leisure, without proper housing or food, without hope of relief, without a living wage. It utterly discountenances all low and unworthy ideas of work: as that a gentleman is one who 'has nothing to do' or who 'need not work for his living'; or that work is an evil and a burden which must if possible be avoided; or that the pursuit of pleasure may be lawfully made the serious business of life. The alarming increase of the gambling habit in England really means that in all ranks of society men and women are anxious to become rich quickly and to do so in forgetfulness or defiance of God's law of work.

It is ill for us if we shirk, from any motive, the discipline of labour and so decline to share the common lot of man. It is equally an offence against the spirit of the fourth commandment if we allow others to labour on the day of rest simply to minister to our selfish pleasure. Unfortunately the prevalent habits of the well-to-do classes have brought about an immense increase of Sunday labour, especially in the case of servants, for many of whom, especially in London and in country houses, the 'day of rest' is the most toilsome of the week. We need carefully to consider how evils of this kind can be remedied. But the first step will be to accept cheerfully in our own persons the law of work: taking care that our time is fruitfully employed in the service of God and of our fellow-men. Moreover, we should remember that the duty of work is particularly incumbent on those who are endowed with special advantages—wealth, leisure, genius, culture, rank. On this subject more will be said in connexion with the eighth commandment, which implies the claim of society upon the *industry* of all its members alike.¹

¹ See below, pp. 191–194, where reference is made to Arch-

We can only learn fellow-feeling with the oppressed victims of excessive toil, we can only enter into their crying needs and sufferings, if we are in a real sense active workers ourselves: contributing by toil of hand or brain, by action or by counsel, to the tasks of civilization and to the extension of God's kingdom on earth.

2. The commandment also enjoins the consecration, or keeping holy, of the Sabbath day. For Christians the main purpose of Sunday, to which cessation from work is subservient, is the worship of God. The Sabbath was intended to remind Israel of its vocation to be a peculiar people, a holy nation. *Ye shall be holy for I Jehovah your God am holy.*¹ After the exile, the observance of the Sabbath was commonly regarded as a sign of the covenant between God and Israel, a token of membership in the holy community.² It was one of those customs which, as it could be practised without interference on foreign soil, kept alive among the Jews of the Dispersion the spirit of nationality. Philo observes that in this, as in everything else, the Jews were enjoined to imitate God. They were not merely to rest from labour as He had rested. They were in all things to be conformed to the divine pattern. The commandment was in fact essentially a call to sanctity; and it imparted to the Sabbath a peculiar significance as a memorial of that for which Israel existed—to manifest in its polity, and in the lives of its individual members, the holiness of God.

deacon Cunningham's book, *The Gospel of Work* (Cambridge, 1902), pp. 39-41. Readers of this book will scarcely need to be reminded of Carlyle's insistence on the law of labour in *Past and Present* (esp. bk. iii. ch. xi.).

¹ Lev. xix. 2; cp. xxi. 8.

² Exod. xxxi. 12-17; Ezek. xx. 11, 12; Neh. ix. 13, 14; cp. Isa. lvi. 6.

The keynote of the Christian Sunday is to be found in its ancient title *the Lord's day*—the day which Christ had hallowed by His resurrection; the day on which He poured down the gift of the Spirit from on high. It was the day when the soul was called to give itself up to the contemplation and praise of God, in order that with heart refreshed and purpose renewed, it might live unto God continually and consecrate to Him all times and seasons alike. This is what Ignatius means when he bids the Magnesians 'lead a life agreeable to the Lord's day'¹: a life, that is, not of formal observances but of spiritual activity and spiritual aspiration: in New Testament language, a life worthy of those who have *risen with Christ*, and are therefore separated from the world and dedicated to the divine service. In this sense Christians are to keep continual Sabbath.²

Sunday is accordingly best observed as a day of retirement from the world. It comes to remind us 'that we should not spend ourselves and our time in perpetually carking and labouring about affairs touching our body and this present life.'³ It is an opportunity for resting in the thought of God: for contemplating His work in Nature and in providence: for worshipping Him in the assembly of the faithful and giving thanks to Him for what He is in Himself and what He has wrought for the good of man: for studying His word and learning His will. Philo lays great stress on the fact that God is described in Scripture

¹ *ad Magn.* ix.: κατὰ κυριακὴν ζῶντες. See Bp. Lightfoot's note. Cp. Bingham, xx. 2.

² *Iren.* iv. 16. 1: 'Sabbata perseverantiam totius diei erga Deum deservitionis edocebant.' Cp. Tertull. *adv. Judaeos*, iv.; Just. M., *dial. c. Tryph.* 229 C.

³ Barrow. Cp. T. Aquin., *Summa*, i. ii. 100. 3: 'Praecipitur quies cordis in Deum.'

as having 'rested.' He dwells on the thought of the Creator contemplating His crowning work—the body and *living soul* of man; and he regards the Sabbath as an opportunity given to the Jews to follow the divine example by devoting themselves to meditation upon, and recollection of, sacred things. We may say that for Christians Sunday is a day of recreation in its noblest sense: a day of freedom from worldly cares; a day for the renewal of the life of soul and spirit. Augustine fittingly connects the commandment with the revelation of the Holy Spirit the Sanctifier. In His presence with us we already have a pledge of the *Sabbath rest* which *remaineth for the people of God*; so that already we begin (as he beautifully says) *in Domino et in Deo nostro tranquilli esse*.¹ The lesson that is specially needed in these days of stress and strain is the need of quiescence in human life, since growth in grace depends not only upon moral activity, but upon receptivity of spirit. The Christian life is a grace or free gift of God. 'Essentially we are throughout receivers not workers.'² In religion, as in the study of Nature, Wordsworth's wise maxim holds good:—

'We can feed this mind of ours
In a wise passiveness.'

Sunday is a precious opportunity for cultivating that meditative habit of mind which is the secret of spiritual insight, of growth in character, and of *peace in believing*. It reminds us that our true destiny is fulfilled by bearing as well as by doing; by being acted upon, not less than by acting; by patience not less than by toil; by yielding ourselves up

¹ *Serm. ix.*, 'De decem chordis,' vi.

² R. C. Moberly, *Atonement and Personality*, p. 320.

to God in that temper of mind which before it says *Lo I come to do Thy will*, breathes the petition, *Be it unto me according to Thy Word*.¹

3. The fourth commandment is a law of rest. It is probable that the Hebrew Sabbath was originally borrowed from Babylonia; certainly it is an institution which in one form or another has its counterpart in the customs of other primitive peoples. There is, however, no need to discuss its origin in this place. The point of importance is that it seems to respond to a vital need, not only of the moral, but of the physical nature of man.

Next to worship, the most obvious duty inculcated by the commandment is the due recreation of the body and mind after six days of toil. 'Let us not,' says Hooker, 'take rest for idleness. They are idle who, the painfulness of action causeth to avoid those labours whereunto both God and nature bindeth them; they rest which either cease from their work when they have brought it unto perfection, or else give over a meaner labour because a worthier and better is to be undertaken.'² Sunday provides an opportunity for an entire change in the *form* of our bodily or mental activity. The hard-worked clerk or business man, the man or woman spent with the toil of workshop or factory, probably needs above all things *physical* recreation, either sheer ease and rest, or the refreshment that comes to heart and brain through open-air exercise. It is impossible to lay down precise rules in matters of this kind. It must be left to the individual conscience to determine what is right and advisable in particular cases. It certainly is not wrong to indulge in outdoor sports on Sundays, so long as such

¹ Cp. J. H. Skrine, *Saints and Worthies*, no. x.

² *Eccl. Pol.* v. 70. 4.

sports enable men to serve God better in the week, and do not interfere with the leisure, or needlessly wound the conscience, of others. But it is clearly contrary to the spirit of the commandment to devote *excessive* time to bodily recreation of whatever kind ; it is dishonouring the *Lord's day* to forget the law of worship. This, as is well known, was the principle which the *Book of Sports* (1618) endeavoured to impress upon the popular mind. ' His Majesty's pleasure was that, after the end of divine service, his good people be not disturbed, letted, or discouraged from any lawful recreation, such as dancing, archery, leaping, vaulting, etc. ; nor from having of May-games, Whitsun-ales, morice dances, and the setting up of May-poles, or other sports therewith used ; so that the same be had in due and convenient time, without impediment or neglect of divine service. . . . And the present recreations are forbidden to any who, though conforming to religion, are not present *in the church at the service of God*, before going to the said recreations.'

It may be doubted whether the Puritans were well advised when they did their utmost to thwart this well-meant attempt to meet a real need and to vindicate an important principle. The passion for recreation has in our time threatened to break through all reasonable restraints, and the problem of Sunday observance has become acute, mainly as the result of individualistic selfishness.

People take their pleasure, not merely in defiance of the claim of their own higher nature, but at the expense of others, depriving them of their rightful share of leisure and hindering them from fulfilling their duty to God. Indeed, the religious question of Sunday observance has a serious social aspect, which has already necessitated legislation, and will doubtless lead to further intervention on the part

of the State. The claims of policemen and other classes, whose labour cannot be altogether intermitted on Sunday, will have to be fairly recognized and satisfied. But ultimately the problem of Sunday recreation is one that must be left to the individual conscience. The question for each is, 'How far does this or that form of pleasure hinder or help my spiritual life? how far does it help me to do my duty to God, or make me more efficient in my appointed work? Above all, how does it affect the liberty or the conscience of others?' For in this, as in all moral questions, we are bound to take account of the ultimate bearings of our own action on the well-being of others. The principles which St. Paul lays down in Romans xii. and xiv. or in 1 Corinthians viii. have their application in this connexion; the Christian is one who lives and acts, in least things as in greatest, 'with a feeling of the whole'; with an eye to the community of which he is a member; honouring all men and respecting their rights; not seeking merely his own advantage nor forgetting to do to others as he would be done by. The entire question at issue needs to be considered, not (as hitherto) from the standpoint of individual liberty, but from that of the highest human welfare.

With these few comments we may leave the subject of physical recreation, having sufficiently indicated the broad principle which demands recognition. As regards other than bodily forms of recreation, it will suffice to point out that Sunday is an opportunity for cultivating our highest faculties by study of the Bible, by reading wholesome and noble literature, or by some other occupation that will counteract the 'Philistinism' towards which, in these days of excessive athleticism, we tend to gravitate: the study of art, the hearing of good music, the cultivation generally of

faculties which lie dormant during the stress of the week's work.¹

4. One other point calls for attention. If Christians are true to what is best and noblest in the Jewish tradition of Sabbath observance, they will regard Sunday as a day of bounty and beneficence. They will think of the fourth commandment as giving a solemn sanction to duties of humanity, consideration for servants and workpeople, and kindness to animals. Our Lord chose to work many of His miracles of mercy on the Sabbath; He used it in such a way as best to illustrate the prophet's utterance respecting *the day acceptable to the Lord*. It was His custom on the Sabbath, as opportunity allowed, *to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke*.² Some form of work for others, some beneficent action on their behalf, is the most appropriate occupation for Sunday. It is a day for knitting closely the bonds of family affection. The home is, or ought to be, the school of brotherly love, and the spirit of kindness learnt there should open our hearts to the need and sufferings of others. So may we hold a real communion with Him Who is *Lord of the Sabbath*.³ 'We find Him' (they are the words of Bishop King, of Lincoln), 'when we feed His lambs; in teaching, in feeding, in amusing children, we find His presence there. . . . When we rejoice with those that rejoice, and help forward the mirth of innocent amusement, we feel Him there. He healed the sick, He fed the hungry,

¹ On 'Sunday Reform' see Canon Barnett's paper in *The Service of God*, pp. 295 foll.; cp. also the remarks (written from a very different standpoint) of Mr. B. Bosanquet in *The Civilization of Christendom*, ch. i. esp. pp. 14-16.

² Isa. lviii. 5, 6.

³ Tert. speaks of our Lord in a fine sentence as: 'Novae legis lator, sabbati spiritalis cultor, sacrificiorum aeternorum antistes, regni aeterni aeternus dominator' (*adv. Judaeos*, vi.).

wept over and raised the dead ; and when we follow His example we know the refreshment of His companionship.' In making Sunday for others a day of health and joy, of refreshment and peace, we are imitating Christ and so fostering most surely in ourselves that which alone brings blessedness—the spirit of devotion to God.

We cannot forget in connexion with the fourth commandment our Lord's promise of rest. The true ' Sabbath of the soul ' is unbroken even by the routine of daily work : for it means that quietness and tranquillity of mind, which springs from a living belief in God's providence, and from a quiet conscience. This restfulness in work, this freedom from inordinate anxiety and sense of strain, is a great power in life. We see it in its perfectness in Christ Himself, reflecting in an earthly life the infinite tranquillity of Him Who is *semper agens, semper quietus*. In its measure this spirit of repose is attainable by Christians, even in the busiest and most hard-pressed lives. They may, if they will, rest as those who are upheld and borne onwards by the Spirit : led to each task by His hand, sustained in each trial and conflict by His strength, gladdened continually by the tokens of His presence and power. In a real sense we are at rest when we work and strive and suffer in the spirit of prayer, in conscious dependence upon God.

We may say in conclusion that the right use of Sundays has a direct bearing both on the spiritual life of individual Christians and on national welfare.

This latter aspect of Sunday observance must not be overlooked. The secularization of the day undoubtedly means the loss of something which has helped in no small measure to build up the greatness and prosperity of the English people. Sunday is a barrier against materialism. A German writer on Ethics even regards it as ' the founda-

tion of English freedom ' in so far as it means ' the subjection of time to the ordinance of God,' and so implies the claim of God on the whole of the national life.¹ The thought of God, the idea that life has a spiritual basis, lies at the root of our civilization ; and Sunday is the periodically recurring opportunity for giving vitality to the thought of God in men's minds, making His existence and His will a supreme power in their lives. How this may most effectually be done is the problem which at present confronts us in view of the widespread reaction from an unintelligent Sabbatarianism, on the one hand, and the growth of individualism on the other. It is vitally important to the national well-being that Christians should recover their hold upon the great principle which underlies the institution of Sunday, for it has been wisely observed that just as the observance of Sunday has in the past rested on religion, so the non-observance also must rest on religion. We must learn to use in a religious spirit the liberty which Christ bestowed on us when He said, *The Sabbath was made for man*.

¹ Dorner, *System of Christian Ethics*, § 54.

V

'Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee.'

CHAPTER VII

THE FIFTH COMMANDMENT

OUR Lord, in accordance with the spirit of the Old Testament, sums up the Decalogue in two precepts : *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God : Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.* But we cannot fail to observe how practically prominent in His teaching is the second table, and how He commends the love of our fellow-men as His *new commandment* on the very eve of His Passion. He declares that men *enter into life* by fulfilling the law of love. The knowledge of God as Father, which is the main subject of His teaching, is to bear fruit primarily in the life of social righteousness, the life of brotherly love ; and conversely, it is through the fulfilment of duty to our fellows that we rise to the love of God.

Morality is thus seen to have its foundation in religion. St. Paul points out in the opening chapter of the epistle to the Romans the way in which the anti-social sins of mankind flow from the refusal to have God in their knowledge. The fifth commandment stands, as it were, on the confines of both tables, inasmuch as parents form a link between the Creator and mankind. As ministers of His providence they share in a real though distant degree, the reverence which is due to Him. To them, as to Him, a debt of gratitude is due which can never be adequately discharged.¹ Further,

¹ Grotius : ' Proximi Deo sunt parentes et veluti in terris dii quidam, quorum ministerio Deus usus est ut nos in pulcherrimum

as the institution of the family is the germ and nucleus of human society, so it is the natural school of social and civic virtue. It exhibits the action of those principles by which society is held together: the principles of authority and equality, of dependence and service. 'In the family,' says Bishop Westcott, 'we learn to set aside the conception of right and to place in its stead the conception of duty.'¹ The family being thus the primary sphere of ethical obligation, the fifth commandment holds its fitting place at the head of the second table. It is noticeable, moreover, that just as the first commandment begins with a revelation of grace, so the fifth has a promise annexed to it: the promise of life. The continuity of family or national history depends upon the loyalty with which each generation preserves what is good in the heritage that descends to it from the past. It is the safety of nations and societies to observe what Burke calls the 'old and settled maxim'—'never wholly and at once to depart from antiquity.'²

I

Duty to parents is enjoined by St. Paul as a law of natural right.³ It is enforced by our Lord's own example of subjection, and the neglect of filial duty is mentioned more than once in the New Testament as a grave symptom of social disorder and moral decay.⁴ Reverence for parents and elders was one of the elements of strength in the highest types

templum suum introduceret.' Aquinas: 'Duo sunt quorum beneficiis sufficienter nullus recompensare potest, scilicet Deus et pater (comparing Arist. *Eth. Nic.* viii. 14. 4).' *Summa* i. ii^o. 100. 7 ad 1.

¹ Westcott, *Social Aspects of Christianity*, p. 22.

² *Reflections on the French Revolution*. Cp. Hooker v. 7. 1.

³ Eph. vi. 1.

⁴ Rom. i. 30; 2 Tim. iii. 2.

of ancient civilization. In Israel's 'Law of holiness' (Lev. xvii.-xxvi.) this duty occupies a remarkably prominent place. Leviticus xix. 2, 3, for instance, implies that the essential holiness of Israel is to be primarily manifested in two directions: first, in a due regard to the claim of parents; secondly, in the careful observance of the Sabbath.¹ The beautiful teaching of Eccclus. iii. 1-16 might be illustrated by sayings of Confucius, Plato and Aristotle. There is a passage, indeed, in Plato's *Laws* which reads like an expansion of the fifth commandment. 'Next [to the honour paid to gods and demi-gods] comes the honour of living parents, to whom, as is meet, we have to pay the first and greatest and oldest of all debts, considering that all that a man has belongs to those who gave him birth and brought him up, and that he must do all that he can to minister to them: first, in his property; secondly, in his person; and thirdly, in his soul. . . . And all his life long he ought never to utter, or to have uttered, an unbecoming word to them, for of all light and winged words he will have to give an account.'² St. Augustine mentions the comfort it gave him that his dying mother called him a 'dutiful' son, and declared that she had never heard him utter against her a single harsh or reproachful speech. 'But, O my God,' he adds, 'how can the reverence I paid to her be compared with the service she rendered to me?'³

The general duty to parents enjoined by this commandment is described in the words of the catechism: 'to love, honour and succour my father and mother.' In the fulfilment of these obligations children are apt to be hindered by pride and impatience of authority, by sloth, by selfish-

¹ Cp. Lev. xx. 9; xxiv. 15.

² Plato, *Legg.* iv., 717.

³ Aug., *Confessions*, ix. 12. 30.

ness, or even by sheer thoughtlessness ; but it is also true that parents on their side are apt to fail in fairness and considerateness, in patience and firmness, in sympathy and wisdom. St. Paul seems to be aware of this when he warns parents not to provoke nor discourage their children by any harsh use of authority or by unduly severe discipline.¹ In days when the psychology of adolescence is more intelligently studied than formerly, we realize how delicate and difficult is the task of directing and training the minds and characters of the young at an age when they are dimly conscious that God Himself is leading them, and is revealing to them visions and ideals which sometimes involve a severe strain on body and soul alike. The storm and stress that accompanies the awakening of new capacities of thought and emotion produces changes in the growing child which are easily misunderstood by parents and often cost them distress great in proportion to the intensity of their affection. It is a hard lesson for parents to learn that ' the young cannot be as the old ; they must fall under new influences ; they must be sensitive to new impressions ; they must hear new things. . . . Youth is a sacred thing. It must go about its *Father's business*. . . . Too often it is sadly alloyed with wrong ; and yet there is something in it which we must revere, with which we may not interfere. There is a point at which we must fall back, and be satisfied to watch and pray.' ²

The fifth commandment regulates home-life and therefore has a direct bearing upon parental duty. But in form, at any rate, it is addressed to the children. It warns them

¹ Eph. vi. 1 foll.

² From a sermon of Dr. H. Scott Holland on ' The Boyhood of Jesus ' in *Pleas and Claims for Christ*, no. xi. Cp. *Old and New*, no. iii. ' From home to home,' by the same writer.

that no enlargement of experience, no expansion of intellectual powers, no change of outward circumstances, exempts them from the fundamental duties of reverence and consideration for parents. In matters of religion (to take only a single instance) the young often enjoy larger privileges and opportunities than did their parents before them ; they are attracted perhaps by a type of worship which is unfamiliar and uncongenial to their elders ; they feel themselves powerfully drawn to take part in forms of social or religious work which are novel and untried ; and there is the danger of making opportunities of this kind an excuse for neglecting home duties, and even falling into the sin of the Pharisees, who in their zeal for a ceremonial law violated a primary moral obligation.¹ On the other hand, some need to be reminded that the first commandment is greater than the fifth, and that the love of parents must not be allowed to interfere with duty to God.

II

The circumstances of modern life, the spread of education, the growth of industrialism, the changed habits and ideals of society, have had a marked effect on the institutions of marriage and the family. The present is a time when the rights of individuality are demanding recognition, and at first sight neither the teaching of the Old Testament nor that of the Gospel appears to be compatible with the spirit of self-assertion. In his brief treatment of the ethics of family-life St. Paul enjoins each member of the typical household to bear in mind the claims of others. The rights of each have their root in the obligations of all. This is the

¹ On the position of the grown-up daughter in the modern house, see an interesting chapter on ' Filial Relations ' in Miss J. Addams' book *Democracy and Social Ethics*, ch. iii.

keynote of all religious treatment of the problem of personal rights. Religion lays the foundation of social order in the fulfilment by all of the actual relationships in which they are placed. In other words, the fulfilment of duty is the necessary condition that precedes the enjoyment of rights ; and the very word 'duty' implies that as moral beings men are *under authority*. The parental claim is typical of many others in so far as it is a claim of nature—of circumstances—which it is morally ruinous to ignore or resist.

A father is the nearest of 'neighbours,' that is, of persons to whom we owe duty and who therefore in some sense have moral authority over us. It is easy to see how by analogy the fifth commandment may be extended so as to include the reverence due to teachers and leaders, rulers and magistrates, 'spiritual pastors and masters,' etc. But when we consider its position at the head of the second table of the Decalogue, we can scarcely deny that it has an even wider scope than this. It implies duties to the aged and weak, the needy and suffering ; to all whose position involves a claim on our compassion and service.¹ Parents in fact are specially mentioned as types of those to whom we owe *service*. It is significant that the primary precept which regulates social duty sets a positive, not a negative, standard. It enjoins the active fulfilment of a relationship which is archetypal and representative. In 'honouring' our parents we virtually confess the obligation to 'honour' all men : that is, to serve them according to their needs and claims to the utmost of our power. The keynote of the commandment in a word is service or ministry : which is also

¹ Nicholas de Lyra : 'Secundum doctores nostros, nomine *parentum* intelligitur omnis proximus in necessitate positus cui est providendum. Unde dicit Augustinus, *Pasce fame morientem ; si non pavisti, occidisti.*'

the note struck by St. Paul in that description of Christian goodness which emphasizes so clearly its social character (Rom. xii.), each using his special gift for the advantage of the whole body of which he is a member.

III

The fifth commandment has a wider aspect than that which we have already considered. It lays down the principle of subjection to authority. It asserts the obligations involved in the earliest human relationship of which men are conscious; it implies that, in the conduct of life, the will of the individual is to be continually guided and restrained by human authority: in the State and in the Church as in the family. Some form of corporate life is the condition of the individual's moral development, and all corporate life involves the existence of authority, the handing on of a tradition, the moulding influence of custom and law. The family, the State and the Church are divine institutions, powers ordained of God for the education of the human race. Their claim on the individual is in reality the claim of *conscience*, that is, the claim of a higher reason and wider experience than that of the individual himself, to guide and control his conduct. Resistance to authority is justifiable in certain circumstances, when it becomes despotic and intrusive and comes into conflict with other claims—those of divine law, or reason, or patriotism, for instance. But in ordinary circumstances authority has an educational value and importance. It makes a moral claim on the individual and the appropriate response on his part is subjection for conscience' sake, willingness to subordinate his own ideas and inclinations to the general or social judgment, which authority practically embodies.¹

¹ Cp. Martineau, *National Duties and other Sermons*, p. 31. 'The

The real ground of that deference to authority which the fifth commandment implies is not that the institution or opinion which claims our assent and submission is ancient, but that it has stood the searching test of time. When the judgment of antiquity has been practically endorsed by the experience of subsequent generations, it seems to embody some essential law of human action 'from which (as Hooker says) unnecessarily to swerve, experience hath never as yet found it safe.' ¹ It may be said indeed that we find it easy to submit to authority in proportion to the measure we possess of the historical sense. History has again and again illustrated the disastrous failure of policies or systems due to the self-will or ingenuity of individuals whose theories had not been tested by fact. The 'law-abiding' temperament is that of the man who is penetrated by a sense of the complexity of all human questions, and who distrusts as narrow and partial the judgment of individuals in regard to matters in which the collective wisdom of a community has hitherto proved itself to be a reliable guide.

The very form of the fifth commandment indicates the ideal nature and character of authority. Authority appeals most powerfully to the individual will and conscience in proportion as it is not legal and coercive, but moral and *parental*. Authority has its seat and source in Almighty God, Whom Christ has revealed as the Father of mankind; as a Being Who aims at educating man for moral fellowship with Himself. Christ taught men to associate with the

inner sense of Duty is presupposed in all outward definitions and enforcement of rights; and the ultimate title and power to govern depend on the ability to interpret and declare, with the voice of eternal majesty, the verdict and requisitions of the moral authority within.'

¹ *Eccl. Polity*, v. 7. 1.

idea of God a greater love, a higher wisdom and a larger insight than their own. He taught them to believe that God's injunctions carry with them the sanction of His own gracious character. The obedience for which He asks is the willing and intelligent submission of sons to the rule of infinite Wisdom ; not merely or primarily their enforced subjection to the rule of irresistible Power.

The authority of the Church is to be regarded as having this moderate, parental character. We are to submit to the guidance of the Church because it represents a Mind larger and more comprehensive than that of the individual ; a Mind which seeks, not to repress or coerce, but to mould the individual reason and conscience. ' The authority of the Church aims beyond all things at ennobling and transfiguring the man who submits to it. . . . It must at all hazards carry the subject-self with it.' ¹ The same is the case, in due measure and degree, with the authority of the State. Government ultimately rests upon the consent of the governed. The aim of an enlightened government is to encourage an intelligent and willing co-operation on the part of its subjects with the great and beneficent purposes for which the State exists. It is true that the standard of social morality which the State publicly enforces needs revision from time to time in the light of growing experience ; but the weapons by which defective laws or institutions are to be amended are not those of force, but of reason and argument. Occasions may of course arise in which resistance to law, active or passive, is justifiable and necessary ; but the modern State is as a rule amenable to the pressure of organized public opinion, which indeed it virtually represents.

¹ H. S. Holland, *Pleas and Claims for Christ*, p. 104.

'The State,' it has been wisely said, 'exists as the *Organ of Right*; to define, to adjudge, to execute it, so far as the common conscience is prepared to own, and the common arm able to enforce it. And inasmuch as the Law of Right is the Law of God, revealed to the heart of our humanity, not voted into being by our self-will, there is a deeper truth in the old religious reverence for rightful authority than in the modern deference to a mere collective human voice.'¹ The State accordingly claims our reverence even while we may be striving by argument or by 'agitation' to educate public opinion, and so to secure the recognition of a higher standard of social justice and personal liberty than has yet been attained. The fifth commandment, in fact, enjoins men to hold in due honour even that which they are rightly endeavouring to make a more perfect instrument of the divine righteousness. The contempt for old and well-tried ways, the passion for innovation at all costs, is the symptom of an essential irreverence and levity of mind. So again the habit of systematically disparaging great historical movements and institutions is usually the mark of a shallow intellect.² 'If I thought of the past with contempt,' says Dr. R. W. Dale, 'I should think of the future with despair.' The fifth commandment, then, regulates our attitude as Christians towards authority. It is a standing protest both against the temper of self-seeking individualism which ignores the just claim of society upon the service of its members, and against the spirit of self-will which refuses to endure the discipline involved in corporate life, or to be guided by the traditional wisdom which it represents. The precept 'Honour thy father and thy mother' reminds us that men

¹ Martineau, *National Duties and other Sermons*, p. 41.

² See as illustrating this Dean Church's remarks on W. G. Ward's book *The Ideal Church in The Oxford Movement*, p. 313.

find their true liberty through loyal and cheerful submission to the claims and requirements of the divinely appointed order of the world.

IV

The promise annexed to the commandment deserves attention, inasmuch as it suggests the thought that national life is a sacred thing, and that its continuity and persistence plays an important part in God's purpose for mankind. A complaint frequently raised against the early Christians was that they were anti-patriotic ; and indeed the primary consequence of the preaching of the Gospel unquestionably was that it withdrew men from the ordinary duties of citizenship and patriotism. The earliest believers rejoiced in their deliverance from the ties which bound them to a heathen society. They frankly despaired of the existing social order, and were thus naturally hated and despised as anti-social enemies of the State, or at least as shirking in cowardly fashion the common tasks of civilization. There are, however, several circumstances which explain and justify this apparent lack of public spirit. We must remember, in the first place, that the expectation of the Lord's speedy return acted powerfully as a restraining force. The Christians were keenly alive to the moral and social evils of their time, but they set their hopes of regeneration, not on any economic change or any political upheaval, but on the direct intervention of God Himself. They were popularly regarded as revolutionists, and certainly they looked for a change, vast and far-reaching, in human affairs : a catastrophe which would assuredly involve the downfall of the mystic Babylon, in other words, the collapse of the Empire before the victorious advance of the Kingdom of God. They believed that social emancipation would be the direct con-

sequence of that reign of Christ and His saints on earth which was the supreme object of their hopes. Very probably this attitude towards existing institutions was imported into Christian thought with the Apocalyptic writings, some of which the Church was able so readily to adapt and to Christianize. In some instances no doubt the Christians actually imbibed that intense hostility to the heathen State which was characteristic of the later Judaism. Some few individuals, indeed, were willing to take part in civic affairs, and even to accept, however reluctantly, the costly burden of municipal offices; but the ascetic view tended to prevail that the service of the State was the service of Satan, and that to quit the world was more worthy of a disciple than to have any part or lot in its affairs and interests. Even Tertullian, who acknowledges ungrudgingly the value of the Empire as a divinely appointed bulwark and safeguard of social order, insists on the necessity for Christians of holding rigidly aloof from its concerns. *Nobis nulla magis res aliena quam publica* ¹ he exclaims; and similar language is used by other early writers.

Again, we must take into account the antagonism of the Christian conscience to the entire social life of the Empire. Like some modern Socialists, Christians virtually despaired of society. It was beyond amendment. Amid the characteristic vices of heathendom—its greed, its callousness, its pride, its hatred, its impurity, the Christian ideal

¹ Tert. Apol. xxxviii. This might be roughly translated: 'To us no wealth is so little an object of concern as the common-wealth.' Prof. Burkitt, *The Gospel History and its Transmission*, p. 211, justly observes that: 'We never do justice to the theory and practice of the first two generations of Christians, if we forget even for an instant that there brooded over them the shadow of the anticipated end of all things.' The belief exercised a powerful influence for at least three centuries.

could only realize itself through entire isolation from the world. The only explanation of the existing condition of Society—a condition of which even the satirist Juvenal confessed ‘Every vice has reached its zenith’—seemed to be that it was wholly given over to the control of evil demons. The most ordinary acts and ceremonies of civic, military and domestic life were connected with beliefs and superstitions that were false, depraved and abominable. Naturally, therefore, the Christians withdrew from society and retired as it were into that sphere of light, love and peace which God had provided for them in the very heart of an evil world. The utmost they asked of the State was to be let alone; to remain unmolested in the pursuit of their own higher aims. The utmost they claimed—in reply to the charge that their ‘impiety’ and ‘atheism’ were the direct cause of public calamities and disasters—was that by the purity of their lives and by the efficacy of their prayers they were really serving the highest interests of the Empire which persecuted them. They were the soul of the State which kept it alive: the salt which saved it from utter decay and dissolution. The Empire was a great and impressive reality; but even its greatness seemed to Tertullian to be rooted in evil: ‘Your very greatness,’ he declares, ‘is the outcome of irreligion.’¹

Once more, we must bear in mind how irresistible and all-embracing was the authority of the Imperial government. Within certain limits a man was free: he might travel

¹ *Apol.* xxv.: ‘Magnitudo de irreligiositate provenit.’ This kind of language seems to us a curious perversion of the actual facts of Rome’s religious history, as described for instance in Mr. Warde Fowler’s remarkable book, *The Religious Experience of the Roman People*.

whither he would by land or sea ; he might trade and make ventures in commerce ; he might settle where he pleased ; but for the rest he must be content to submit without reserve to the iron rule of a despotic administration. It has been truly observed that in the Roman Empire ' politics, as we understand the word, had no place.' ¹ The average citizen had no part in the making or administration of the law ; he could not denounce any obnoxious measure or any tax which pressed hardly upon him. There was no possibility of calling a meeting or starting an agitation ; it was dangerous to display any active interest in the reform or abolition of existing institutions. Thus, when we are attempting to explain why the immense social ' potency ' of Christianity was not in practice more effective, it is unfair to make it a matter of reproach to the Christian believers of the first four or five centuries that they merely shared in the complete ' political passivity ' of their contemporaries. We may wonder how it was that they apparently overlooked those teachings of St. Paul which contain the germs of a true theory of the State, and of a social policy which in later centuries has actually achieved such vast and beneficent results. But in any case the fact remains that for the time being, at least, no duty seemed to be enjoined in the New Testament save that which necessity itself dictated : that of passive submission to the authority of the State : of rigid isolation from the world and its affairs. The Church had perforce to content itself with paving the way for those modern conditions which have opened up so many different avenues for Christian enterprise and self-sacrifice. It paved the way by regenerating individual lives, by slowly leavening the tone of society, and

¹ Westcott, *The Gosp. of the Resurrection*, pp. 202 foll.

by exhibiting in action the immeasurable greatness and the transforming force of Christ-like love.¹

In process of time, however, when, after the break-up of the Empire, the principle of nationality began gradually to assert itself, the Church developed a sense of its catholic function—namely, to consecrate the special gifts and excellences of each race and nation. Thus the virtue of Patriotism came to be recognized, and the love of country was seen to fall in with the highest social ideals of the gospel : service, self-sacrifice for the common good, love seeking the advantage not of the individual but of the body.

The converse of this spirit has occasionally manifested itself in modern history. It has sometimes been maintained that the State exists exclusively to secure the rights of individuals—to guarantee full protection and liberty to all citizens in the exercise of their religion, and in their competitive struggle for privilege or wealth. But this narrow conception of the State has been completely discredited by the teachings of experience. It has come to be recognized that the State exists in order to promote and protect the social welfare of all its members : to ensure that no class is unfairly hindered from enjoying its share of the common good or from contributing its quota to the common tasks of the community. Loyalty to the true idea of the State as the embodiment of public right and the common sense of justice, in opposition to the exaggerated claims of any one class, is an essential part of obedience to the spirit of the fifth commandment. Any industrial movement (such as Syndicalism) which ignores the claims of the nation as a whole in favour of those of a single class or trade,

¹ On all this subject see two useful chapters in W. Rauschenbusch, *Christianity and the Social Crisis*, (chh. 3 and 4).

which would destroy the moral authority of the State in the interests of a narrow economic theory, implies an unwarrantable breach with the past, due reverence for which is, as we have pointed out, a vital element in the stability of national life. Experience holds out no prospect of permanent fruitfulness or advantage to a policy which aims at securing the interests not of the people as a whole but of a particular class. It shows that a *kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation*. It teaches that individuals and classes exist for the service of the State : for the ennoblement and enrichment of the Commonwealth to which they belong.

In the fulfilment of this high function Christian citizens of the modern State are free and unfettered : they are free to protest against abuses, to initiate reforms, to proclaim ideals, to suggest lines of policy, to influence legislation by the weight of organized opinion. It is open to them to use intelligently the privileges of democratic citizenship, and to labour by hand or by brain—by action or by counsel—for the removal of those conditions of modern social life which war against the souls and waste or destroy the bodily lives of men. To a Christian eye the State is a divine ordinance for promoting human well-being in the widest sense : not merely holding in check the spirit of lawlessness and violence, but capable also within limits of moulding the habits and forming the character of its citizens. Christians cannot, even were they so inclined, be hostile or indifferent to this mighty potency of the State for good. They must needs recognize it as one among many instruments which God employs for the advancement of His kingdom on earth. The true mission of the State is, in fact, to protect the helpless, to uplift the downtrodden, to overthrow the organizations of evil ; in a word, to secure

for each individual opportunity to make the best of his life. But the State can only rise to the height of its possibilities when it enlists the services of all men of good will, and when it is inspired by ideals and principles which are in their origin and tendency essentially Christian.¹

¹The subject of Authority in the Church, its nature and limits, has already been discussed in *The Rule of Faith and Hope*, chap. viii. pp. 146-152.

VI

‘Thou shalt do no murder.’

CHAPTER VIII

THE SIXTH COMMANDMENT

THE fifth commandment seems to recognize gradations of rank and authority in human society. The sixth asserts the complementary truth of the equality of all men in the sight of God, Who is *no respecter of persons*. The principle which underlies the command to *do no murder* is reverence for human nature as such : a principle which finds its primary application in regard to our own personality since ‘ a man’s nearest neighbour is himself.’ Self-love is a Christian duty, because every human being has a nature capable of good—capable of union with God ; and to love our neighbour as ourselves is to *honour all men*, not for what they actually *are* in condition or character, but for what they have it in them to become. For this reason human life is sacred : any outrage done to it is a kind of desecration of the divine image ; to protect and preserve life is a part of natural justice. Accordingly, we may regard the sixth and the three following precepts of the Decalogue as claiming due respect for the inalienable rights of personality : the right to live, and the right to enjoy whatever tends to the fullness and perfection of life.’ Thus marriage, property and good name are alike to be guarded by all for the sake of each.

From the treatment of the sixth commandment in the New Testament, we may infer that the reverence for human-

ity which Christ enjoins takes for granted two different (but not antagonistic) aspects of the law of justice. According to the Gospel view, justice means, on the one hand, love *working no ill to his neighbour*; on the other, love actively rendering *to all their dues*. 'Justice,' says St. Bernard, 'consists in two things: in harmlessness (*innocentia*) and beneficence; harmlessness is the beginning of justice; beneficence is its consummation.' ¹ To abstain from doing wrong to another is the negative observance of the commandment; to *do good*, to observe *the law of kindness* ² in every relationship, is the positive fulfilment of the precept as Christ Himself has expounded it. Nor must we forget that our Lord exhibited the inner significance of His teaching in action. He fulfilled the spirit of the commandment when, in harmony with His declaration that He came not to destroy men's lives but to save them—*He went about doing good*; when He treated even outcast sinners with compassion and reverence, when He ministered to others rather than exacted their ministry for Himself. The strongest claim that men as men have on our honour and respect is that they wear that nature which was assumed and perfected in divine merit by the Son of God Himself.

I

Thou shalt do no murder. In developing the scope and meaning of this commandment our Lord does not merely exhibit in word and example its positive aspect. He points out that the essential breach of the law consists in a certain temper: a wrong disposition of mind and will towards others. Reverence is to be kept alive by checking the spirit of hatred and contempt. Thus we find three different

¹ Bern. *Serm. de diversis*, liii. 2. Cp. Rom. xiii. 7 foll.

² Luke vi. 35; Prov. xxxi. 26.

degrees of anger reproved in the Sermon on the Mount¹: first, the causeless and silent resentment which nourishes unkind and revengeful thoughts; secondly, anger breaking forth in contemptuous, reproachful or violent speech. So St. Paul excludes *revilers* (λοιδόροι) from the kingdom of God. To address a brother-man with words of contempt (*Raca*) is to forget what he is,—a being made in the image and likeness of God; to call him ‘fool’ (in the full significance of the Hebrew term) is a kind of imprecation, expressing the wish that a man may be estranged from God. The third form of offence is anger cherished in the mind and allowed to become a settled habit of hatred and enmity. This (our Lord implies) is a barrier which shuts the soul out from divine acceptance. It separates from God. So St. John teaches: *He that hateth his brother is in the darkness and walketh in the darkness. Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer. He that loveth not abideth in death.*²

Characteristic of Christian Ethics is the transfiguration of anger. Resentment, as Bishop Butler reminds us in a famous sermon, is a necessary element in worthy human character. It has its rightful objects; it serves a great social function. Our Lord Himself once at least looked round on His hearers *with anger because of the hardness of their hearts*.³ Righteous anger means active hostility to evil, especially to those forms of evil which are hurtful to others or to the community. It has value as giving to the wrongdoer a foretaste of the future consequences of sin. The display of anger is a means of taking an active part in the divine process of judgment and retribution. We have spoken in another connexion of the divine anger;

¹ Matt. vi. 21–26. Cp. 1 Cor. vi. 9, 10.

² 1 John ii. 11; iii. 14, 15. Cp. Gen. iv. 14 (of Cain): ‘From thy face shall I be hid.’

³ Mark iii. 5.

that relentless and essential hostility to evil which necessitates an objective Atonement for human sin. This is an aspect of religious truth which is uncongenial to the modern mind. A shallow and optimistic view of sin and its consequences renders men insensible to the terrors of the divine wrath; they attribute to God Himself the same 'languid, unmeaning benevolence' with which they themselves minimize or palliate wrongdoing.¹ In a highly civilized society people are apt to offend quite as much by the absence of resentment, as by its misdirection. They are usually intolerant of that which hurts their prejudices, interferes with their comfort or reproves their faults; while they passively acquiesce in social arrangements which tend to destroy men's lives and to dishonour God; in conventions of society which involve a continual violation of divine laws.

II

Resentment, then, has a *social* function to fulfil in human life. 'The forfeiture of good-will by the wrongdoer is the natural defence of Right among men; and to tamper with it is to imperil an essential security of the moral life.'² To lack resentment altogether is a fatal flaw in character; to restrain its action when a grave wrong has been done to others—some act of barbarity or oppression, some flagrant perversion of justice, some selfish refusal to render a necessary service—may involve faithlessness not only to a man's own conscience but to the higher interests of human society. But the practical question for most people is what should be their attitude in regard to the common sins and imper-

¹ Newman, *Parochial and Plain Sermons*, vol. ii. no. 23.

² Martineau, *Types of Ethical Theory*, ii. 201.

fections, which in themselves or others constitute ' trials of temper,' and are matter of everyday experience. We are ' provoked ' continually by the perversity, wrong-headedness, stupidity and carelessness of others : and this state of things constitutes a real discipline of the passion which we call anger. We must not forget, indeed, that the tendency to anger is not infrequently a mere infirmity—a symptom of disease or of over-strained nerves, and to a certain extent is excusable. But anger, sometimes in its mildest forms, and often in its outrageous excesses, is closely connected with other sins : pride, envy, intemperance, or the love of gain. It is to be attacked at the root by practising, in all spheres of conduct alike, the habit of self-command : in speech, in recreation, in work, in the common intercourse of social life. Again, the example of the Saviour in His Passion teaches us that prayer for others is a means of subduing anger. Prayer is an act by which we commit the injury done to us to *Him that judgeth righteously*. It places us in a new attitude towards the offender, suggesting the thought of his needs rather than of his faults. Finally, we may remember that vehement anger against another is incompatible with a due consideration of our own faults. In expounding the ninety-first psalm (*Qui habitat*) St. Bernard says : ' the dragon here mentioned (verse 13) I take to be the spirit of anger. How many persons of seemingly virtuous life have been scorched by the breath of this dragon and have become his victims ! How much more wisely would they have been angry with themselves and so avoided sin ! Certainly anger is a natural affection in man, but to those who abuse nature's good gift it is a terrible cause of ruin. Let us employ it in ways that are useful, lest it break forth in ways that are unprofitable and lawless. . . . Be not angry with those who take away from you

transitory possessions, who insult you, or torment you and beyond that can do nothing. I will show you with whom you ought to be angry. Be angry with that which alone can do you real injury—I mean your own sin. For no adversity will harm you if no iniquity rule in you. He who is duly indignant with sin, is not disturbed by aught else; nay, he rather welcomes it. He is prepared for discipline,' etc.¹ In other words, the proper object of anger is not mere infirmity or poverty of character, but sin as such, especially our own. Yet even in regard to our own sin, we have to beware of self-contempt or self-disgust. We have to be patient even with our own faults and not give way to faithless despondency on the score of our continual failures. We must reverence in ourselves, as in others, the image of God: that 'coming self' which can be realized only by [continual dependence upon the divine grace. In regard to the infirmities of others our Lord Himself has exhibited the supreme pattern of forbearance. Of Him, the true High Priest of humanity, we read that *He can bear gently with the ignorant and erring for that He Himself also is compassed with infirmity*.² The beautiful Greek word here used is a peculiar one: its root idea is *control* of every passionate impulse, especially of anger. It implies that blending of grief, pity and holy displeasure which is ideally the right feeling of the human soul in its relation to the faults and ignorances of mankind. The word has been happily described as containing a kind of summary of St. Luke's Gospel. The life of Christ was that of 'One Who, in presence of the ignorant and wandering, maintained that exquisite equilibrium of feeling which

¹ Bern. in *Psalm*. 'Qui habitat,' xiii. 5.

² Heb. v. 2. The Greek word here in question is *μετριοπαθεῖν*, on which see Westcott.

was at once just and sweet, strong and gentle '¹: full of tenderness for weakness and poverty; full of compassion for the sinner, yet not without severity in judging of his fault. It is the heart of the High Priest that breathes the prayer, *Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do*: the heart which sees divine possibilities even in the worst, and which can unerringly discern the exact measure as of their guilt so of their misfortune. It is this 'feeling in moderation' which we need in judging of the faults and infirmities of mankind. There is something more than practical wisdom in the saying, 'In order to love mankind we must not expect too much of them.' It was one secret of Archbishop Fénelon's extraordinary spiritual power and attractiveness that he habitually acted upon the truth of this maxim. Shortly before his death he wrote to a friend, 'I ask little from most men; I try to render them much, and to expect nothing in return, and I get very well out of the bargain.'² Very characteristic too is a similar remark in another of his letters: 'Overladen as we are with our own faults, we are sensitive and impatient towards those of our neighbour. We can often do more for other men by correcting our own faults than by trying to correct theirs.' By cultivating such a spirit as this, anger is transformed: free from bitterness and excess, from contempt and cruelty, it 'becomes charity and duty'³: neither lightly nor wantonly aroused, and restrained in its outflow by the spirit of compassion and by zeal not for revenge but for justice and truth.

III

In connexion with the sixth commandment the question

¹ Abp. Alexander, *Leading Ideas of the Gospels*, p. 8.

² See Morley, *Aphorisms*, p. 49.

³ Bp. J. Taylor.

is sometimes raised, even in the present day, whether war is lawful under any circumstances, and whether capital punishment is justifiable. These more or less academic questions do not seem to demand prolonged discussion. We must remember that the very people which was brought *into the bond of the covenant*¹ by being subjected to the moral law of the Decalogue, was allowed to wage war in self-defence upon surrounding nations, and was strictly required to punish certain offences with death. War is ultimately attributable to human sin, as St. James points out²: but as things actually are, the right to wage war is a necessary weapon of government, which is charged with the protection of its subjects against wanton aggression and violence.³ Barrow puts the case simply and forcibly: 'He hath not forbid sovereigns (in case of necessity and when amicable means will not prevail) to maintain the safety or welfare of the societies committed to their care, even by armed violence, against such as wrongfully invade them or any wise harm them, and will not otherwise be induced to forbear doing so; in which case the resolution of such differences (insomuch as they cannot be tried at any other bar or composed by other means) is referred to God's arbitrement: Who is the Lord of hosts, the Sovereign Protector of right and Dispenser of success; the soldier in a just cause being then His minister and carrying a tacit commission from Him.' The function of the soldier is analogous to that of the civil officer of justice: in relation to the crimes and acts of violence by which one nation assails

¹ Ezek. xx. 37.

² Jas. iv. 1.

³ Turretin, *Inst. theol. elenct.* xi. 'De lege Dei,' xxii. 6: 'Eo ipso quo Christus Magistratus dominationem non sustulit, sed confirmavit; eo ipso etiam jus belli gerendi approbavit, cum ad Magistratum pertineat subditos adversus injustam violentiam defendere.'

another war is in the last resort the only available means of repression and self-defence. It is one of the essential rights of human society in its natural state: an institution which, like many others, Christianity accepts as a dreadful necessity, while at the same time it strives to prevent the causes of war, to mitigate its calamitous effects, and to bring about a state of international amity which shall ultimately render it impossible.

The question of the use of capital punishment, on the other hand, is one of social expediency; but its lawfulness in the abstract depends upon the view we take of human nature. The death-penalty is not to be viewed merely as a deterrent, by which human life is protected, but as a mark of our reverence for that mysterious gift of *personality* which constitutes in man the image of God. An outrage done to human life is a crime which no human law can adequately punish. It is obviously an offence against society; but in a peculiar sense it is a sin against Him of Whom man is an earthly counterpart, and to Whom he is, by the very constitution of his nature, akin. Capital punishment is thus a solemn vindication of the dignity of human nature; it appeals primarily to fear as a legitimate means of inculcating that reverence which is the only true safeguard of human life.¹

It scarcely needs to be pointed out that the sixth commandment absolutely prohibits self-murder, as a sin against God which infringes His sovereign rights over the creature of His hands; a sin against the State, against the family, against the Law of Nature itself. Suicide is the wilful abandonment of a post of duty and of trust, assigned by divine wisdom and care; but in its simplest aspect it is an act implying lack of faith and hope in God. Even to

¹ Cp. Eyton, *The Ten Commandments*, 88-90.

heathen sages it seemed the part of wisdom and patience to wait for God Himself to give the signal of departure, and to release each soul from its appointed ministry and function in the world.¹

IV

In the earlier portion of the Sermon on the Mount, our Lord devotes Himself to explaining the relation between the new law of righteousness which He came to proclaim, and the ancient law which it was destined to supersede. He taught that the old law was to be regarded with reverence as a real revelation of the divine will, yet with discrimination, as a rule of life which was in itself imperfect, adapted primarily to the requirements of a primitive age in human history, and only finding its completion and fulfilment in the New Testament. To illustrate His meaning he takes three commandments of the Decalogue in order to elucidate their inner significance and intention: the sixth, the seventh and the third. He shows that the characteristic mark of Christian morality is 'inwardness': in other words, the habit of keeping steadily in view the presence and will of the unseen God, whether in the fulfilment of our relationships to others or in the discipline and development of our own nature. In moral action, it is the will, the motive, the intention alone that matters. Every thought and word and action is to be directed Godward, and is to be judged in the light of His will. The one object of life is to be that of pleasing God²: any lower

¹ See the discussion in Turretin, *ubi sup.*, xvii. 23, 24.

² 1 Thess. iv. 1, Col. i. 10; cp. Rom. viii. 8; 1 Cor. vii. 32. Notice the contrast between the use of *ἀρεσκος*, *ἀρέσκεια* in Christian and Pagan Ethics. See Dean Church, *Bacon* (in 'English Men of Letters'), p. 3.

standard of life than this is ultimately fatal to sincerity and strength of character. The Christian should in all things be aware, consciously or subconsciously, of the presence of Him *Who seeth in secret*. In fact, the perfect morality is 'Theocentric.' God is all in all; His will is the standard of conduct; His approval, the reward; His love, the motive power. Accordingly our Lord deals with each of the three commandments above named on a principle which, as we have, seen, applies to all the others; a principle which we may fairly say determines the difference between sin and vice. When we call an act 'sinful' we are judging it not merely with reference to the standard prevalent in human society, but in the light of the moral judgment of God. We call an act of vice 'sinful' because, beyond and apart from all its material and earthly consequences to ourselves or to our fellow-men, it is an offence, a dishonour, an outrage done to God *Who seeth in secret*.

In the chapter which follows this exposition of the inner significance of the Decalogue (St. Matt. vi.) our Lord proceeds to speak of three great departments of practical religion: our duty to our neighbour, to ourselves, and to God: to each of which branches of conduct there corresponds one special and typical form of action. We discharge our duty to our neighbour by almsgiving; to our own personality by fasting; to God by prayer; and each of these we are exhorted to practise, not that we may challenge the attention of men or win their approval, but simply with a view to what our heavenly Father would have us be and do in His sight. It does not seem fanciful to connect our Lord's teaching on these three points with His exposition of the three typical commandments dealt with in the preceding passage. The ideal fulfilment of the sixth commandment implies the habit of almsgiving in its

widest sense ; the seventh commandment, rightly understood, enjoins that spiritual discipline of the whole personality of which fasting is the divinely appointed means ; the third commandment teaches the duty of constantly recognizing in all the affairs of life the presence and the providence of God ; and this is virtually the meaning of prayer, which has been simply defined as ‘ an elevation of the mind to God,’ or (in the words of St. Augustine) *conversio cordis ad Eum*.¹

It is needless to dwell on the close connexion that subsists between the practical duties enjoined in the sixth chapter of St. Matthew’s Gospel. These three practices are manifestly elements in the perfect character. You cannot rightly call a man ‘ good ’ who conspicuously fails in any one of them. A good man is one who is Christ-like : who follows the footsteps of Him Who ever *went about doing good*, Who *pleased not himself*, and Whose whole life on earth was inspired and gladdened by communion with God. The life of active charity is only entirely praiseworthy in so far as it includes on the one hand the love of God, finding its proper outlet in prayer and in the service of God’s creatures ; on the other that discipline of self, that spirit of self-denial and self-control, without which even St. Paul felt that he might become a castaway.² So conversely ‘ a life of prayer is a life whose litanies are ever fresh acts of self-devoting love ’ ; while the life of self-denial should be inspired and regulated by a desire to serve one’s fellow-men and to minister effectually to their needs.³

¹ Fr. Baker, *Holy Wisdom*, p. 341 ; cp. Aug. *de serm. in Monte*, ii. 14.

² 1 Cor. ix. 27. Cp. a beautiful passage in Robertson’s *Sermons*, vol. iv, p. 140.

³ Cp. Greg. Mag. *de pastorali cura*, p. iii., 19 : ‘ Non enim Deo,

It would seem, therefore, that to be in any sense complete, our exposition of the sixth commandment should include a brief reference to the Gospel teaching on the subject of Almsgiving. We naturally think, first, of the comprehensiveness of the term. Almsgiving means the fulfilment of *the law of kindness* in its widest sense. It includes all works of mercy done either to the bodies or the souls of men. We have noticed already how prominent is the place assigned in our Lord's teaching to the second table of the Decalogue: to our duty towards *man*. We remember, too, that in the solemn judgment-scene of St. Matthew xxv. 31 foll., the standard by which human character is tested is the observance or neglect of the law of brotherly kindness. *Forasmuch as ye did it not unto the least of these My brethren, ye did it not unto Me.*

Our Lord also says something as to the motive of almsgiving. We are to give alms, that is, to show mercy and lovingkindness up to the full measure of opportunity, in order that we may be true *children of our Father which is in heaven*.¹ Almighty God *gives to all men simply*, St. James tells us; He makes His sun to rise upon the evil and the good; but He does not give indiscriminately in the sense that He gives without regard to the highest welfare of His beneficiaries. We, too, in imitation of Him, are to bestow alms 'simply': not merely with a generous recognition of our brother's need, but with a single eye to his real good; with compassion for his difficulties, a large allowance for his faults, and an earnest desire to restore his self-respect and to improve his character. It is a truism to say that the life of the Lord Jesus was one of active love. He lived on

sed sibi quisque jejunat, si ea quae ventri ad tempus subtrahit, non egenis tribuit.'

¹ Matt. v. 45. Cp. Jas. i. 5; Rom. xii. 8.

terms of friendship with evil men as well as good. He received sinners and ate with them; He deigned to be called *the Friend of sinners*; His last companion on earth was a penitent malefactor; and His express teaching is always in close accord with His habitual mode of dealing with humanity: *Give to him that asketh thee*, He says; *Do good and lend, hoping for nothing again, and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be the children of the Highest*. The free, ungrudging bounty of God is the law of His life. The eye of man may be evil, but He is in the widest sense of the word, GOOD. His example teaches us that by 'simplicity' is meant the endeavour to make all lovingkindness to man a part of the service of God. He does indeed imply in one passage (St. Luke xi. 41) that almsgiving may also be regarded as a means of grace, conferring spiritual benefit on the soul of the giver. This aspect of it indeed finds a prominent place in the writings of some Christian Fathers, just as it does in the practical theology of the later Judaism, which treated almsgiving chiefly as an ordinance by which sins might be purged and gifts of grace obtained.¹ But we instinctively feel that in any case the motive of charity cannot in the last resort be self-regarding, even while we recognize the deep truth of the saying (more than once alluded to by Apostolic writers): *Charity shall cover the multitude of sins*—an aphorism which some have even regarded as an unwritten utterance of our Lord Himself.

But do we find in our Lord's example and teaching any sanction for 'indiscriminate' charity? Some have actually thought so, and have accordingly made it their practice to act literally on the precept *Give to him that asketh*. 'Give simply,' says the ancient Church writer Hermas, 'not

¹ Cp. Dan. iv. 27 with Dr. Driver's note (in 'Camb. Bible'). See also 1 Pet. iv. 8 and Jas. v. 20 with Mayor's note (p. 170).

questioning to whom you should give or not give, making no distinction.' The responsibility for any harm that may result from such bounty he would shift from the giver to the receiver. It is the recipient, he declares, who is accountable if in any respect he abuses his benefactor's kindness.¹ But this teaching is surely based on a shallow view of Christ's injunction. He possessed exactly what we lack, namely, a perfect insight into human nature ; a deep circumspection which implied a perfect balance of all faculties : reason, emotion and will. His act of charity was inspired by pity and guided by perfect knowledge of the circumstances with which He was dealing. He 'considered' the poor and needy (see Ps. xli. 1). He understood their wants as we, with our limited knowledge, cannot. He looked on them as beings with a capacity for higher than bodily satisfactions. He bade them *not labour for the meat that perisheth, but for that meat which endureth to everlasting life*. He treated them reverently, hopefully, wisely, giving them something better than silver and gold ; bestowing on them attention, care, sympathy, honour, love. He dealt with each needy, suffering, ignorant or fallen being as a child of the Father, capable of goodness, capable of friendship with God. He taught us accordingly not to be dismayed or repelled by a poverty of character that is often inevitable. He showed us that those who would minister to the infinite needs of our stricken humanity must have learned to penetrate to the deep-lying causes of its age-long sorrow. To have the mind of Christ is to look out upon the world with His eyes, to seek inspiration in the thought of God and of His impartial love for His creatures, to cherish in spite of all disillusionment and discouragement an unflinching reverence for

¹ *Hermas, mand., viii. 10.*

the nature which the Son of God came to hallow and redeem.

Christians, then, are not required to obey slavishly the letter of the Gospel precept without regard to present conditions and consequences.¹ They are not only to have Christ's example in view, but to share His *mind* in all that they undertake. What that mind dictates is the true law for us. In relieving cases of distress or poverty we are not to ignore the teachings of experience. We are called to take trouble : to devote pains and thought to each individual case presented to us : to aim at dealing not so much with the symptoms as with the causes of misery ; not merely with the sufferings of the individual, but with those defects or anomalies in the social system which crush him or deprive him of his rightful share of the common good. This is to give not only our money, but ourselves, to the poor and needy ; they have a claim on our time, our consideration, our thoughtful care, which we are apt to evade, sometimes on the ground that we have done enough when we have given money, sometimes because we believe the problems of poverty to be so complex that the action of a single individual is a matter of indifference.

V

We have seen that the sixth commandment implies the positive duty of active care for the bodily and spiritual welfare of others. If it is primarily a law of justice, protecting the natural and inalienable rights of our fellow-men, it is

¹ Cp. Hooker, *Eccl. Pol.* v. 68. 2 : ' Our imitation of Him consisteth not in tying scrupulously ourselves unto His syllables . . . To do throughout every the like circumstance the same which Christ did . . . were by following His footsteps to err more from the purpose He aimed at than we now do by not following them with so nice and severe strictness.'

not less certainly a law of mercy or kindness, enjoining the fulfilment of all good offices which tend to preserve and to elevate human life. For as Turretin says : ' A lamp may be extinguished in two ways, either by forcibly blowing out the light or by not supplying it with oil. So the life of another is destroyed, either by violently assailing it, or by impiously withholding those means of subsistence by which it might be preserved.' Thus the commandment has an unmistakable bearing upon modern social problems. The Gospel is a message of salvation, and as such is addressed to the entire nature of man, since salvation means the preservation and exaltation of *life*, the liberation of *manhood* from all that defiles, crushes, weakens and mutilates it. The Christian Church is as it were the embodied conscience of the modern State. So far as the State fulfils its ideal function it protects and fosters *life* in its widest sense.

The sixth commandment, *Thou shalt do no murder*, suggests the claim of social responsibility which is so apt to be lost sight of amid the complex conditions of modern life. It enjoins upon each Christian the energetic use not only of money, but of personal influence, in striving to alleviate the evils of poverty. It implies that we are only true to the spirit of the Gospel if, in ministering to human need, we consent to be guided by the example of our Lord and by the teachings of experience ; if we avail ourselves of all that economic or sanitary or medical science can teach in regard to the conditions of bodily and mental health ; if we bring the pressure of a strong Christian opinion to support those who are called to deal directly with industrial problems, e.g. the problems of housing, of health, of hours of labour, of a minimum wage. We are learning by bitter experience that our national neglect of these problems has meant the destruction and impoverishment of life on a

fearful scale. *We are verily guilty concerning our brother : therefore is this distress come upon us.* The formidable upheavals in the labour world which have recently disturbed the peace of our nation are the natural result of an un-Christian indifference to the crying needs of the toiling masses on whose labour the fabric of our civilization rests. By our present troubles God is undoubtedly summoning us as a nation to repentance, and is teaching us that the great principle of Christ's religion which we have ignored to our cost is reverence for human personality, for the image of God in man. The precept we have been considering, in fact, anticipates the celebrated maxim of Kant, the neglect of which has been the characteristic sin of modern civilization: 'Every intelligent being stands under this universal law, never to employ himself or others as a means, but always as an end in himself.'

It must not, however, be forgotten that relief of the bodily ills of the suffering poor is only a part of our duty towards society. A Christian cannot forget that *a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth.* He knows that the real root of human misery is sin with all its consequences; that no social changes can in themselves alter those radical defects in human nature which tend to make it miserable; in a word, that salvation means health—but health not merely of the body. It means the recovery of life, deliverance of the whole nature from the evils which lay waste and destroy the soul, avarice and selfishness, sloth and sensuality, envy and greed, faithlessness and despair. It means the bringing of human souls into direct contact with the redeeming love and grace of Him Who is Himself *the Prince of Life.* It is to Him that we must come if we ourselves would have life, or impart it to our brethren.¹

¹ John v. 40; 1 John v. 16.

VII

‘Thou shalt not commit adultery.’

CHAPTER IX

THE SEVENTH COMMANDMENT

PHILO expounds the seventh commandment before dealing with the sixth. He observes that the prohibition of adultery follows the fifth 'word' of the Decalogue because 'adultery is the greatest of iniquities' (*μέγιστον ἀδικημάτων*), and it has its root and origin in that love of pleasure which, as Aristotle points out, is an even baser principle of action than the passion of anger. This arrangement of the precepts was perhaps traditional in the churches of Egypt and North Africa¹; it is expressly mentioned by Tertullian in his treatise *de Pudicitia*,² and is justified on the ground that adultery is closely akin to idolatry; accordingly, the precepts which guard spiritual fidelity and reverence for parents are fittingly followed by that which forbids adultery. It is noteworthy that the commandment makes no mention of particular offences against purity beyond that one which is most destructive of the integrity of family life, and most antagonistic to the well-being of human society. Adultery was, in fact, a crime which, under the law of Moses, was punishable with death,³ while the Gospel

¹ The arrangement of the commandments did in fact vary in different versions. The Vatican codex of the Septuagint arranges them in the following order: the seventh, the eighth, the sixth. Philo's order is also that of Luke xviii. 10, Rom. xiii. 9; cp. Jas. ii. 11.

² Chap. v.

³ Levit. xx. 10.

regards it as the heinous profanation of a *great mystery* which symbolizes the union of Christ Himself with His redeemed people.

In discussing this subject we may well consent to be guided by our Lord's own example. To offences against the law of purity He scarcely ever alludes. When they are obtruded upon His notice He treats them with an austere and solemn reserve which is far more impressive than the sternest denunciation. Indeed, the New Testament as a whole says little concerning the fearful prevalence and ruinous consequences of such sins. There exist, indeed, forms of evil which are perhaps most effectually dealt with not only or chiefly by open denunciation, but rather by exhibiting positively the glory and loveliness of that Christian grace which excludes them and puts them to shame.¹

I

The first point that calls for attention is that so far as our Lord deals with the sin prohibited in this commandment, He is chiefly concerned to proclaim a new ideal of marriage. His teaching on this great subject is perplexing and even unwelcome to the modern mind, impatient as it is of restraint and control; it is sometimes even set aside as 'impracticable' in view of the actual moral situation, the actual problems, which confront civilized States. But at least it is perfectly clear and self-consistent. Christ unquestionably taught that marriage is a union dissoluble only by death; and in so doing He *excludes* any such anticipation of re-marriage, while both partners survive, as might cause or aggravate estrangement, and so might tend to weaken the

¹ Cp. Eph. v. 12.

marriage-bond. It is true that to this principle of the indissolubility of marriage one exception has been sanctioned in certain parts of the Christian Church, on the strength of the well-known passage (xix. 6) of St. Matthew's Gospel. But it is far from certain that this relaxation is warranted by the original text of the passage; nor is there in any case any sentence in the Gospels which even indirectly favours that extension of the grounds of divorce which is so impatiently demanded in certain quarters at the present time. It is evident that our Lord, in His references to the subject, intended to set before His hearers a positive ideal of marriage. He was apparently bent upon correcting those lax ideas which had fostered a low moral tone in the Jewish society of His day, and which had been the occasion of very serious practical evils. He lifts the whole subject on to the highest level when He expressly reviews it in the light of the divine purpose for humanity. He insists upon that which God ordained *from the beginning*. The law which He enunciates, it has been truly said, 'is not primarily intended to make allowance for social failures, but to establish the principles of the kingdom of God.'¹ His teaching wears an aspect of severity for the very reason that He is dealing with moral laws which men can only defy or ignore at their peril. He maintains the sanctity of marriage and the integrity of family life in the interests of the spiritual kingdom which He came to found. He does not so much concern Himself with cases of social disorder as with positive principles of social health.

Apart indeed from the express authority of Christ there is much that might be said touching the danger and inexpediency of tampering with the marriage law of the Gospel. The fabric of European civilization virtually rests upon the

¹ Peabody, *Jesus, Christ and the Social Question*, ch. iii, p. 158.

institution of matrimony as Christianity has shaped and purified it ; and experience shows that laxity of view, or in other words, familiarity with the idea of divorce, is perilous to the stability of the social order. It is in their capacity as citizens, responsible for contributing by their vote and influence to the general welfare of the community, that Christians oppose alterations in the law of marriage. They are alive to the fact that causes are at work powerfully tending to undermine the security of marriage. There are economic conditions which hinder or restrain the home-forming instinct. There is the restlessness of individualism which refuses to take into account any other interests than those of the parties personally concerned in the marriage contract. There is a sensitiveness to pain which overlooks the permanent welfare of society in its compassion for particular 'hard cases' ; a dislike of discipline which revolts from the notion that men and women are liable to suffer the consequences of their own heedlessness or misconduct. There is, finally, the tendency of much modern fiction to invest with a sentimental and sometimes unhealthy interest, the failures of wedded life. How then are these causes and tendencies to be counteracted ? Not surely by yielding to the pressure of lax or self-interested opinion, but by endeavouring to recall men to the true ideal of marriage. The hardships and evils which are supposed to call for legislative interference are largely due to the fact that marriage is contracted lightly and inconsiderately, without any adequate sense of its seriousness as a vocation, as an education of character, as a social institution implying duties to the community. Nor could anything be more perilous to the institution of marriage, or indeed to the social order of which it forms the foundation, than the notion that it is to be regarded as an experiment, and that an irksome union

may be terminated at the mere pleasure of the parties concerned. If marriage is not a permanent union, but only a temporary contract, the motive for accepting the discipline involved in wedded life necessarily disappears. As Joseph Hume says, 'How many frivolous quarrels and disgusts are there which people of common prudence endeavour to forget when they lie under a necessity of passing their lives together ; but which would soon be inflamed into the most deadly hatred were they pursued to the utmost, under the prospect of an easy separation.' 'Nothing,' he adds, 'is more dangerous than to unite two persons so closely in all their interests and concerns as man and wife, without rendering the union entire and total.'¹

The seventh commandment thus suggests the duty of attentively considering those tendencies in modern life which make for domestic instability, the prevalence of extravagant and artificial standard of living, the stress of economic conditions unfavourable to family life. These conditions may be modified by the pressure of Christian opinion, by prudent legislation or by improved education. A little steady thought will suffice to convince us that problems of marriage stand in very close relation to some of our industrial troubles, which can be traced in the last resort to the 'unsocialized desire' of individuals. It is perhaps a sense of the connexion between various forms of social disorder that leads St. Paul to associate sins of greed or covetousness with those of sensuality.² Both types of evil are in the strictest sense anti-social ; both are symptoms of that individualistic selfishness which is plainly antagonistic to domestic, civic or national well-being.

¹ *Essays*, no. xviii., 'Of Polygamy and Divorces.'

² 1 Thess. iv. 6 ; 1 Cor. vi. 9, 10 ; Eph. iv. 19, v. 3-5 ; Col. iii. 5.

II

It would be out of place in a brief exposition of the Decalogue to discuss further the intricate questions connected with the institution of marriage: questions of social policy, questions of ecclesiastical discipline, questions of principle, questions of expediency. It seems more practical to call attention to the general idea of purity which the seventh commandment implies. In its narrower sense purity signifies the restraint and discipline of what is in itself an innocent instinct. We are again reminded by the very form of the Decalogue of the fundamental place which self-control holds in the development of goodness. *Thou shalt not.* The prohibition is as it were an appeal to the whole man, bidding him obey the true law of his nature by bringing all his instincts and appetites under the control of the will. Purity in the strict sense means freedom, the freedom of him 'whose flesh is controlled by the law of his mind, and the law of his mind subject to the will of God.'¹

The word 'purity,' like 'temperance' and 'sobriety,' bears in the New Testament a much wider meaning than is usually assigned to it. St. Augustine goes so far as to identify the purity of heart mentioned in St. Matthew v. 8 with 'singleness' or 'simplicity' of heart.² It signifies the integrity of a nature which finds the perfect satisfaction of all its desires in God Himself, and which is crowned with blessedness by the vision of God. In the narrower sense, however, of freedom from sensual defilement, purity was a virtue which before the coming of Christ held at best a precarious position. That Israel was not essentially above the

¹ St. Leo.

² 'Hoc est mundum cor quod est simplex cor' (*de serm. Dom.* i. 2. 8).

level of the rest of the ancient world in this respect, we may gather from the toleration of polygamy, which was a contradiction of that primal law of monogamous marriage to which our Lord recalled the Jews of His own day ; and also from the fact that grave lapses from chastity were not infrequent in Old Testament times. These were often closely connected with Israel's inveterate tendency to idolatry ; the prophets, in fact, often describe the apostasy of the nation and its addiction to the cult of foreign deities as ' adultery.' As regards the Gentile world, heathen moralists could inculcate purity of life only by appealing to self-regarding and prudential motives. They had no resources for taming or restraining the force of human passion. Purity was thus a virtue which men despaired of attaining. Religion itself was corrupted at the source ; the current mythology was often a factor in the general demoralization, and in course of time the better elements in the ancient religion passed over into the Mysteries which actually made some appeal to the consciousness of moral defilement though they could not thoroughly appease it, and which at least bore their own imperfect witness to the truth that a clean heart and pure life were needed for acceptable approach to the Deity.

Christianity grappled with the evil which was too strong for the heathen world by re-emphasizing, with sanctions peculiar to itself, the Stoic doctrine of the sanctity of the human body. Seneca had spoken of God as ' near us, with us, within us,' as ' lodging in the human body.' Epictetus reminded men that they carried God about with them, within themselves, not realizing that they were doing despite to His presence by impure deeds or unclean thoughts. But St. Paul strikes a higher note when he speaks of the body as the very ' temple ' of the Holy Spirit, and teaches

that the bodies which are misused in sin are *the very members of Christ*. The sin of uncleanness indeed outrages that nature which the Son of God cleansed and hallowed by the Incarnation. The fleshly substance which He assumed and sanctified by the merit of His own divine Person is henceforth sacred, and is to be kept undefiled by the power of a regenerated will. Christian purity, in fact, is the crowning instance of that self-control (*ἐγκρατεία*) which is the fundamental element in Christian holiness. This 'self-control' was at first not unnaturally identified with sexual purity, and was soon extended to include renunciation of the world and mortification of the flesh.¹ Purity is the sustained and habitual endeavour to bring every bodily impulse, every affection, every instinct and faculty into subjection to Christ. But though the way of ascent to purity of heart lies through the practice of 'soveran self-control' in all things, great or small,² it must not be forgotten that its essential meaning is not mere abstinence from fleshly defilement, but the positive dominion of the Holy Spirit in the heart and will. Purity is, in fact, an element in that grace of temperance which forms part of *the fruit of the Spirit*, and as an endowment of the Spirit was perfectly manifested in the incarnate Son of God. 'Where,' St. Bernard asks, 'is temperance to be found if not in the life of Christ? Those only are temperate who strive to imitate Him . . . Whose life is the mirror of temperance.'³

Before we pass on to consider the nature of purity in its deeper and more comprehensive sense, it is fitting to mention certain aids and safeguards which the experience of Christians has found serviceable.

¹ Cp. Harnack, *The Expansion of Christianity*, vol. i. p. 111.

² 1 Cor. ix. 25.

³ *in Cant.* xxv. 11.

First among these is the power of a living faith. The Gospel supplied a new and potent motive to purity in proclaiming the sanctity of the body which had been hallowed by the Incarnation and redeemed by the Passion of the Son of God. That which He had worn as a vesture and had exalted in glory to the throne of God could no longer be misused as an instrument of sin.¹ The prominence of this idea in the New Testament is a plain proof that religion aims at protecting 'the founts of life' from waste or contamination. It seeks to protect the young at an age when

in the morn and liquid dew of youth
Contagious blastments are most imminent—

when both body and spirit are undergoing the strain involved in physiological changes. It invests with honour and sanctity both the physical and moral aspects of wedlock. Christianity is the religion of life. It makes for vitality—for the exaltation and enrichment of life. It sternly discountenances any misuse of the body, the vigour and perfection of which is an element in that saving health and wholeness of human personality in which salvation consists.² The faith which saves is in one aspect a whole-hearted belief in the divine purpose to redeem every element in our nature—the body with its functions not less surely than the soul with its great capacities.

The law of *mortification* has an obvious bearing upon the process of self-purification. *If thy right eye causeth thee to stumble, pluck it out. If thy right hand causeth thee to stumble, cut it off and cast it from thee.* We cannot forget that temp-

¹ Rom. vi. 11 foll.

² Cp. the following petition in the liturgy of Sarapion, bp. of Thmuis in Egypt (c. 350): *χάρισαι ὑγιάν καὶ ὀλοκληρίαν . . . ὅλῳ τῷ λαῷ τούτῳ.*

tation assailed David, the man after God's own heart, through the eye.¹ Our Lord couples with the wandering glance the lawless thought and undisciplined desire; in these He teaches us to discern the root of evil; these are equivalent to the very act of sin. So 'mortification,' as Bishop Wilson insists, 'must go further than the body.'² It implies of course the use of some discipline of the body: moderate diet, occasional fasting, and other wholesome austerities. But it also involves constant control of the thoughts and the imagination, watchfulness against the beginnings and occasions of evil, the cutting off of even innocent pleasures that are found by experience to be perilous to purity of heart. Indeed, in our conflict with temptations of the flesh, we need to realize the crucial importance of the habit of self-control in all things: in the use of food, in the choice of books, in recreation and the pursuit of enjoyment, above all perhaps in speech. The foundations of self-mastery are laid in childhood. The psychology of crime and insanity often points to a failure early in life to gain self-control in little things³; it illustrates the nemesis which, sometimes late in life, overtakes an uncontrolled habit of yielding to moods and impulses, to importunate cravings for bodily satisfaction or mental excitement. It proves that on the habits of youth depend the far-distant issues of life, and that the whole aim of moral education should be the discipline and strengthening of the *will*.

It is fitting to mention in this connexion the value of the Church's penitential discipline. The great misery of sin against the seventh commandment is that in a special degree

¹ 2 Sam. xi. Cp. 2 Pet. ii. 14.

² See *Sacra Privata*, Wednesday meditations.

³ Newman Smyth, *Christian Ethics*, p. 354. See the whole passage.

it fetters and defiles the conscience: robs the soul of self-respect, of hope, of simplicity, of joy. It darkens the heart and seals the lips. It leaves the soul lonely, outcast, and wretched in the sense of its isolation. No sin leads so directly to hypocrisy: to variance between outward semblance and inward reality. Now to many who have been involved, whether through their own fault or that of others, in this kind of trouble, the ordinance of private confession, offered to their free choice by the Church, has brought exactly the help and comfort they need; it has been to them a fount of healing, peace and renewal. Or short of this great and blessed aid to moral recovery, real help may be found in opening the heart to some trusted friend or adviser. In some cases one who is entangled in this way is best advised to 'open his grief' to some wise and kindly physician, who can sometimes minister to a mind diseased even more effectually than a priest. In any case, the unburdening of the mind, whatever be the form it takes, is a sovran remedy in dealing with such evils as we are here concerned with.

Of other aids to purity, a brief mention will suffice. The seventh commandment implicitly prohibits idleness, sloth, extravagance or immodesty in dress and behaviour, and all other forms of bodily self-indulgence which expose the soul to fleshly temptation. Nor must we overlook 'the expulsive power of a new affection,' the subtle and ennobling power of an innocent human love:—

Not only to keep down the base in man,
But teach high thought and amiable words,
And courtliness and the desire of fame,
And love of truth, and all that makes a man.

This is indeed only one aspect of the truth that purity consists not so much in emptying the heart of illicit desires

as in learning to love aright. Thus everything that tends to foster the love of God, and of man for God's sake, is a power making for purity of heart. Here the careful culture of the imagination has its value. Some will remember the passage in which Plato insists that the æsthetic faculty needs a serious discipline from childhood onwards. In the ideal state he holds that poets and artists should be restrained from hindering the cause of true culture and virtue by feeding the imagination of the citizens with unworthy or immoral representations.¹ The Christian spirit, while claiming as its own the Apostolic maxim, *All things are yours*, regards the gifts of civilization—art, literature, the drama, etc.—as a heritage to be used with a serious sense of responsibility, not ignoring the influence of imagination as a factor in the building up of character and in the formation of ideals of life. It is needless to speak particularly of the power of ejaculatory prayer and of recollection of the divine presence. We will simply remind ourselves, in the hour of danger and conflict, of Christ's sympathy with the tempted. He has felt the full pressure of temptation, *yet without sin*; and one mighty aid to purity is devout recollection of the travail which He underwent in order to be made *in all things like unto His brethren*. We may be strengthened and encouraged by the thought that He watches our struggle, that *the darkness is no darkness* with Him; that He sits on the throne of grace—He, 'the King of purities, the First of Virgins, the eternal God Who is of an essential purity,'²—ready to succour them that are tempted in their time of need, and able *to save to the uttermost them that draw near unto God through Him*.³

The seventh commandment is primarily intended to guard the sanctity of marriage. What has just been said on the

¹ *Repub.* 401 foll.

² Bp. J. Taylor.

³ Heb. vii. 25.

subject of purity suggests the further remark that personal chastity is the only true preparation for wedded life. Nothing more vitally concerns the future welfare of civilized society than the diffusion among all classes of a higher and more serious view of marriage than is at all commonly held. The Christian Church holds wedlock in due honour as a solemn and sacred 'mystery,' as a sacramental ordinance which is to be reverently approached and jealously guarded from even the least profanation. On the lowest estimate, it is a *moral* union, which serves a social function of far-reaching importance. Hooker speaks of single life as 'a thing more angelical and divine,'¹ and there can be no question that in certain cases, and in the fulfilment of certain kinds of work, celibacy is a vocation not to be declined without moral loss to the worker, and detriment to his efficiency. But for the greatest part of mankind marriage is the divinely appointed school of character, the sphere in which personality is trained for service on earth and for the larger ministries of the life beyond death. Wedded life involves a training in self-control, self-sacrifice, patience, courage, affection, faith. It is a symptom of social disease when a widespread unwillingness manifests itself to accept the discipline of marriage or to fulfil its duties. Whether this is due to selfish dislike of responsibility, or fear of poverty, or the mere desire to enjoy a higher standard of comfort and a larger measure of personal liberty, it un-

¹ *Eccl. Pol.* v. 73. 1. On the other hand Bp. J. Taylor says: 'Single life makes men in one instance to be like angels, but marriage, in very many things, makes the chaste pair to be like to Christ.' 'Marriage,' he adds, 'is divine in its institution, sacred in its union, holy in the mystery, sacramental in its signification, honourable in its appellation, religious in its employments; it is advantageous to the societies of men, and it is *holiness to the Lord*' (Sermon on 'The Marriage Ring').

questionably involves the impoverishment both of character and of social health. On the other hand, the married are apt to forget that 'happiness' is not the only or chief end of wedlock; and that it was ordained not for the gratification of individuals, but for the accomplishment of a spiritual purpose respecting mankind at large. If men and women seek impatiently to extricate themselves from difficulties and trials for which in many instances their own folly and want of consideration are answerable, they need to be reminded that they are in danger of refusing a discipline which, bravely accepted, would be found fruitful in blessing, personal and social.

III

Purity in the higher and larger sense of the term is virtually equivalent to simplicity or singleness of heart. It springs directly from a vivid realization of the presence of God. Speaking historically, the idea of 'purity' gradually passed over from the religious and ceremonial sphere into that of ethics; the notion of outward dedication of a person or object gave way in process of time to that of inward integrity and sanctity. Purity in the wide sense implies the dedication of the will, and so of the entire personality, to God; not the mere sacrifice of innocent desires, but the hallowing of them; not the toilsome effort to acquire a single virtue, such as continence, sobriety or temperance in the narrower sense, but the endeavour to attain to goodness. Simplicity or purity consists in seeking to please God in all things; to accept His will as the one rule of all life. The pure heart is that which sets itself continually to seek God; passing through all things onwards and upwards to God; holding fast to a single purpose amid the bewildering multiplicity of calls and duties, claims and

responsibilities, which tend to dissipation of energy and division of mind. Thus purity imparts to character that moral unity which we see manifested in its perfect lustre in Christ—the unity which results from devotion to a single end—the love and service of God.

It is this lovely grace to which is vouchsafed the promise of the vision of God.¹ *Cor purum penetrat caelum et infernum.* The perfect vision which satisfies not the intellect only, but every instinct and faculty of the soul, is the climax of a lifelong process—the persistent effort to withdraw the heart from all lower things ; the concentration of the entire nature on God and His will. For purity, as we have seen, is not mere abstinence from sin, not the mere cleansing of the heart from inordinate or base desires ; it is desire itself, love itself, directed aright, and finding in God its one true and satisfying end and aim. The pure heart seeks not God's gifts, but Himself. It looks to Him as the only adequate response to its unfathomable yearnings. It believes that what He *is* rather than what He *gives* is the true life of man. *Vita hominis, visio Dei.*

¹ Matt. v. 8. Cp. *Imitatio Christi*, ii. 4.

VIII

‘Thou shalt not steal.’

CHAPTER X

THE EIGHTH COMMANDMENT

IT is evident that this precept gives a sanction to the institution of private property, an institution which experience has shown to be an important factor in the development of personality. Property is an instrument by which character is trained and high service to mankind is rendered. For the right of any individual to accumulate and enjoy it implies a corresponding duty to society; in other words, the right is limited by the claims of the community. Accordingly, while the commandment of Moses and the Gospel of Christ equally recognize the institution of property, they also imply, though not with the same explicitness, the truth of two qualifying principles: the principle of stewardship and the principle of social solidarity.

I

1. The Gospel teaches us to see in property not so much a private possession as an opportunity, an instrument of the good will, a means of rendering service to mankind. It regards life as a stewardship, each being endowed with some gift which he is required to employ for the common good. Wealth, position, influence, leisure, genius—all these are bestowed and held in trust, and are to be administered in accordance with the Gospel rule: the abundance of one

a supply for another's need.¹ So that property is acquired and used in contravention of the moral law if its possessor refuses to acknowledge the claim of society upon his wealth. The theory of the medieval canonists was that *labour* is the sole cause of wealth, and the only just title that can be alleged for its possession. According to this view property is only legitimately acquired or held in so far as it is an exchange for service rendered or the reward of work done. It is a form of robbery if it is accumulated, e.g. by dishonest trading, by reckless speculation, by gambling, or by withholding from the labourer, who by his toil helps to produce it, just and fair remuneration. Thus the application of the commandment in modern times is seen to be very far-reaching. It presses home upon each conscience the question, 'Am I responsible, in virtue of my method of acquiring wealth, my expenditure, my social influence, my vote, for a social system or policy which defrauds, oppresses, degrades or crushes any class of persons in the community to which I belong?' The employment of wealth constitutes a great opportunity for growth in character: it may train its possessor in generosity, self-restraint, unselfishness, industry, practical wisdom and sagacity. But all this will depend on the extent to which he recognizes the *human* element in the industry which produces his wealth and acknowledges the claim of the producer to a just share in the proceeds of his toil. Thus if labour be the only or the principal source of wealth, the eighth commandment has a direct and important bearing upon the ethics of industry. The employer, actively engaged in organizing the production of wealth, owes to his workpeople a living wage: that is, the means of living a decent human life morally as well as

¹ 2 Cor. viii. 14. Cp. Greg. Mag., *de pastorali cura*, iii. 20: 'Admonendi sunt . . . ut a caelesti Domino dispensatores se positos subsidiorum temporalium agnoscant,' etc.

physically. The abstract word 'labour,' which is so often employed as if it represented a mere commodity of the market, actually stands for a multitude of *living men* who toil and serve, and are thereby brought into a *personal relationship* with their employer: who have *personal* rights corresponding to the functions which they discharge in the social organism. The Christian conscience cannot therefore be at ease while masses of human beings are toiling without proper housing or food or adequate wage; in other words, without 'opportunity of cultivating their highest human instincts—their intelligence, their family affections, their spiritual faculties. It recognizes such guiding principles of industry as these: that the business of man, as an ethical being, is to *moralize* the struggle for subsistence; that the due remuneration of the toiler ought to be the first claim on the fruits of industry; that no individual is rightly used as a mere machine or instrument, but that each as a personal being is an end in himself; that property being in a sense created by the community is only defensible on the condition that it renders service to the community; that (in a word) all wealth of whatever description is subject to the law of stewardship or trusteeship.

2. There is a second principle of New Testament ethics which virtually presents the same truth in another aspect: the law of solidarity. *We are members one of another*, and therefore the range of human obligation constantly tends to be enlarged in different directions. It extends beyond the members of a man's family to his friends, to his fellow-workers, to the community in which he lives, to mankind at large. The range of duty is practically unlimited, since in a real sense every man is the 'neighbour' of his fellow-man: *Proximus homini homo*.

In more than one of his epistles St. Paul passes in review

the different relationships that subsist in a single household—that of husband and wife, that of parent and child, that of master and servant—and briefly describes the obligations belonging to each. We may remember, however, that the family is ‘the unit of civilization’; the germ of the State. Domestic relationships are typical of those that subsist in the larger social group. The family exhibits the very principles on which the political order is based. It provides a training in that spirit of mutual service, and that sense of corporate responsibility, which build up and hold together the fabric of a nation’s life. Thus we are bound both as citizens and as Christians to consider the bearing of our habits of life on the welfare of the whole community to which we belong, for we violate the eighth commandment in so far as we ignore the rights and claims of others : especially of those who depend upon us, or minister in any way to our needs. This implies a moral thoughtfulness which is far from being common even among Christian people. How few consider the actual conditions under which multitudes of our fellow-men are toiling to produce the conveniences and comforts on which they depend, the clothes they wear, the food they eat, the fuel which keeps them warm and maintains the national industries. *We are members one of another*, and our aim as Christians must be to secure for all alike their rightful share of social good, and to emancipate all alike from the conditions which endanger, degrade and impoverish life.

It would be perhaps misleading to single out particular duties in this connexion. We have touched upon the general obligation of moral thoughtfulness. There can be no doubt that sheer thoughtlessness on the part of owners of wealth is responsible for a vast proportion of the social misery, dishonesty and fraud which disgraces the life of civilized

communities. It has been truly observed that the existence of property appears to increase the amount, and to aggravate the character, of crime more than anything else.¹ It directly tends to produce the worst faults to which human nature is liable ; it fosters the spirit of lawlessness and discontent which gives rise to crimes of greed, fraud and violence. These results are due to forgetfulness that by the law of Christ property implies not a multitude of personal possessions, but a potent instrument of social service. The inequitable distribution of property has at many periods of history suggested drastic schemes for forcibly redressing the evils for which it is responsible. But the real problem to be solved is not that of acquisition and accumulation ; rather it is that of administration or use. No practicable scheme of altogether abolishing the private ownership of wealth has ever been suggested ; but if the production of wealth can be organized on a human and ethical basis, if the instinct of private gain-getting can be replaced by that of service, a great proportion of the evils which beset modern industry will be mitigated or altogether removed, for it will be recognized that wealth is a trust to be employed for the common good.

The principles involved in the eighth commandment obviously have a bearing upon the difficult question of commercial morality. In trade and commerce, as in the ordinary social intercourse of life, the principles of Christian ethics hold good. In the one sphere as in the other action ought to be regulated by the rule of honesty, justice and truth. This, however, is a subject which we must be content here merely to mention. That the life of business is capable of being hallowed and made an instrument of vast moral and social good we may gather partly from the fact that

¹ Eyton, *The Ten Commandments*, p. 112.

our Lord finds in it lessons and illustrations bearing upon the nature and progress of His kingdom ; partly from the way in which it actually trains character and achieves great and beneficent results. Doubtless it involves spiritual and moral perils of a grave kind ; but the experience of many who are engaged in commerce and industry proves that Christian faith and rules of conduct can be carried into the transactions of everyday business. It is fair, however, to suggest that the difficulty of so doing is often attributable to the fault of consumers, who are not directly interested in the business world, but who by their passion for cheap commodities, and by their indifference to the conditions under which they are produced, encourage unscrupulous and fraudulent practices in trade and manufacture.

II

We turn now to the positive teaching implied in the eighth commandment.

1. Of the sense of obligation we have already spoken. The Christian maxim of social life is *Render to all their dues*. The work of the Church is the progressive manifestation of the fellowship of mankind in Christ. The inequalities of endowment, physical and moral, which make human society what it actually is, constitute so many opportunities of mutual service and self-sacrifice. ' Just so soon and so far as we regard ourselves and others *in Christ*, to use St. Paul's phrase, according to the divine counsel, we shall strive to secure for each man, as for ourselves, the opportunity of fulfilling his part in a divine society, for developing a corresponding character, for attaining in his measure to the divine likeness.' ¹ As in the family, so in the larger social order,

¹ Bp. Westcott, *The Incarnation a Revelation of Human Duties*, p. 16.

the Gospel would fix men's attention not so much on the rights and privileges attached to their *status* in the community as on the vocation which it involves. This seems a very simple and commonplace principle of action, but it is the secret of the difference between the Christian and the non-Christian view of social problems. In an ideal state of human society men would not have to contend for their own rights; they would obtain them as the result of the fulfilment of duty by their fellows. St. Augustine points out in a well known passage that since the sum of Christian ethical doctrine is the precept of love, that is, an earnest regard for the claims and needs of others, religion is necessarily the great safeguard of the State, securing efficiency and conscientious fulfilment of function by every individual and by every class, and knitting the whole community in one.¹

2. The commandment includes also the duty of diligence. *Let him that stole steal no more, but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing that is good.*² We defraud others if we fail to use our talents and capacities fruitfully and faithfully; if we devote too much time to pleasure and recreation; if we are idle, evading the tasks and duties that belong to our position, or misusing the opportunities placed within our reach; if we are eager to grow rich without personal toil or readiness to serve. In the passage quoted above, St. Paul is speaking of work as a duty which man owes to his neighbour—a duty which as a rule is determined for him by the needs and claims of others. But the obligation and value of work lies in its relation to the development of man's entire personality. It is a duty which he owes to God, to himself, and to the community. It is to be conse-

¹ *Ep. ad Marcellinum*, cxxxviii. 15; cp. *de civ. Dei*, ii. 19.

² *Eph.* iv. 28.

crated by spiritual purpose and accepted as a moral obligation. Each is bound to use profitably his special gift or talent ; to co-operate as it were with God by toil of brain or hand, by action or by counsel, for the extension of that *regnum hominis* which prepares the way for the *regnum Dei*. Each owes it to himself to accept the discipline of character and temperament which strenuous work involves. Moreover, he is bound to contribute his share to the general good of society : to fulfil his function, to take his part in the common tasks of civilization. The well-being of all, indeed, depends ultimately on the fidelity of each. If any individual, of whatever class, shirks his task or squanders his special talent, he defrauds others of their due, and innocent people reap the consequences of his neglect. This is plainly true of all who belong to the labouring or professional classes. But the obligation presses with special urgency on those who owe their wealth or position to the exertions or prudence of others—whether ancestors in the past or dependents in the present. A man of rank or leisure who is content to enjoy the fruit of others' toil without a fair return in *service*, or who uses for selfish ends wealth which others have helped to create robs mankind. It is a serious thought that to a large proportion of property in modern times the maxim 'Property is robbery' is literally and strictly applicable. 'As a fact,' says a writer on economics, 'much of the wealth of the rich classes in modern Europe,' and we might add in America, 'has been gathered together and is kept up by dreadful deeds of cruelty, extortion and fraud.'¹

Society, then, rightly claims the *labour* of the man of culture, rank or leisure. His position of privilege implies not freedom from this claim, but a stronger obligation to

¹ C. S. Devas, *Groundwork of Economics*, § 261, quoted by W. S. Lilly, *Right and Wrong*, p. 197.

fulfil it. In most instances, if not in all, he is indebted for his wealth to the labour of others, and is rightly expected to perform services corresponding to his station, whether educational, social, municipal or political. 'A gentleman,' writes Isaac Barrow in his *Discourses of Industry*, 'hath more talents committed to him than an artisan, and consequently more employment required of him: if a rustic labourer or mechanic hath one talent, a gentleman hath ten; he hath the succours of parentage, alliance and friendship; he hath wealth, he hath honour, he hath power and authority, he hath command of time and leisure; he hath so many precious talents entrusted to him, not to be wrapped in a napkin or hidden underground; not to be squandered away in private satisfactions, but for negotiation to be put to service in the most advantageous way in God's service. . . . He particularly is God's steward, entrusted with God's substance for the sustenance and supply of God's family. . . . Surely that gentleman is very blind, and very barren of invention, who is to seek for work fit for him or cannot easily discern many employments belonging to him of great concern and consequence.'¹ Even more appalling than the contrasts of wealth and poverty, of luxury and squalor, is the contrast between the life of cultured ease and agreeable occupation which is enjoyed by a comparatively small class, and the life of exhausting, incessant and ill-requited toil which falls to the lot of millions. To them 'work,' which ought to be an honour, a joy and a moral discipline, is too often a weariness, a bond-service and a curse. To observe the spirit as well as the letter of the eighth commandment, Christian citizens in the modern industrial state are bound to use their utmost influence to

¹ See Cunningham, *The Gospel of Work*, pp. 40, 41, where this passage, with others from Barrow's *Discourses*, is quoted.

secure for the toiling multitudes such shortened hours of toil, and such an adequate wage, as may transform their labour into a means of growth in mental vigour and grace of character.

3. The passage from St. Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians, to which reference was made above, ends with the words : *that he may have whereof to give to him that hath need*. The commandment we are considering implies the active duty of generosity in giving. The possession of wealth offers manifold facilities for service, and thus the question of expenditure, of the ethical use of money, naturally suggests itself. It is a subject which may perhaps be most suitably dealt with by briefly reviewing the different claims involved in the various relationships of life : the relationship of a man to himself, to his neighbour, and to God.

As to personal expenditure, including the cost of maintenance, clothing, the care of health and all that makes for mental and bodily efficiency, it is only necessary to point out the need of sobriety or temperance. We have to ask ourselves what we are aiming at in life ; what is really essential or desirable for the development of our character ; and how we may render ourselves efficient for the discharge of our special duties in life.¹ A great authority has told us that ' more than half of the consumption of the upper classes of society in England is wholly unnecessary.'² Accordingly what we should aim at is simplicity. We should steadily aim at becoming, like St. Paul, men of few wants (Phil. iv. 12), contenting ourselves with what is plain and good in quality, and otherwise consistent with the de-

¹ Hooker, *Eccl. Pol.*, v. 76. 5 : ' They are blessed in worldly respects that have wherewith to perform sufficiently what their station and place asketh.'

² Prof. Marshall, *Principles of Economics*, vol. i. p. 124.

mands of our position and work. Discretion and self-restraint in minor things will leave us ampler means for obtaining such legitimate 'luxuries' as will heighten the joy and grace of life, and so promote its power to enrich, uplift and gladden others. Money may rightly be expended on those forms of recreation which, wisely enjoyed, tend to elevate a man's own nature, offer him new opportunities of usefulness, and remind him continually of the glory and goodness of God. There is such a thing as using the world without abusing it; and He Who *giveth us richly all things to enjoy* would have us receive His gifts in the spirit of thanksgiving. But we must ever bear in mind the continuous demand that life makes upon us for self-control and definiteness of moral purpose; for the education of our faculties and the discipline of our desires.

In connexion with personal expenditure, however, we must recall for a moment the fact of our responsibility as consumers. Christians should, as Bishop Westcott has pointed out, do their best to 'raise the whole *status* and level of industry by sedulously educating themselves to desire good things, to know good things, and to look beyond every article to the labour of all those who have helped to bring it to us.' ¹ We have already observed that the passion for cheapness is apt to blind the consumer to the conditions under which articles are produced. Here is an opportunity for the good use of personal example and influence: since social betterment depends largely upon the growth of a demand among consumers that the articles purchased by them shall be good in quality and produced under conditions which neither degrade the worker nor condemn him to impaired health and semi-starvation.

¹ Bp. Westcott, *Lessons from Work*, p. 353.

It is needless to dwell at length on the use of money for purposes of social service. Every one is called to decide for himself the precise direction in which he will spend his efforts. There is no lack of enterprises designed to improve social conditions. The housing of the poor ; the promotion of temperance or education ; the providing of recreation or open spaces for the toiling or overcrowded masses ; the care of the aged poor ; the founding of libraries and social institutes, of labour homes and refuges ; the formation of companies to promote co-operative production and distribution—these are some of the fields which offer opportunities to wealth and philanthropy. We have already suggested that the Christian philanthropist should let himself be guided by the teachings of experience, and that ‘ almsgiving ’ should be adapted to the special conditions and circumstances of each age.¹

Finally, we have to consider the claim upon wealth of God and of His kingdom. It was the sin of the rich fool that he was not *rich towards God*.² It is, of course, true that in serving mankind we are rendering to God His due. In the conscientious expenditure of wealth we are actively recognizing the fact of our stewardship. Nevertheless, there are claims of religion to be considered. We must take account of the great and urgent needs of the home and foreign mission field ; of the spiritual destitution in great cities ; of the organizations of error and evil which can only be counteracted by the power of religion. Every Christian ought to take some share in the work of Church extension at home and abroad ; he ought to do what lies within his reach to share with others the spiritual privileges which he enjoys. A conscientious man will devote to reli-

¹ See pp. 164, 165.

² Luke xii. 21.

gious purposes more or less according to the fluctuations of his income and the number of primary claims upon it (e.g. the maintenance and education of his children, and the duty of making adequate provision for their future).¹ But at least a certain portion of his income should be dedicated to the service of God. It is the great danger of an age of widely diffused wealth and comfort that it loses the sense of spiritual realities. St. Paul bids rich men counteract the materialistic temper by putting their trust not in the dead idol of riches but in *the living God*, Who is ever working in the world for the accomplishment of a spiritual purpose, and calls upon His children to co-operate with Him in the enlargement and perfecting of His Kingdom.²

¹ The primary duty of making provision of this kind is implied in such passages as 1 Tim. v. 8 and 2 Cor. xii. 14.

² 1 Tim. vi. 17.

IX

'Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour.'

CHAPTER XI

THE NINTH COMMANDMENT

THE ninth commandment, like the third, is concerned with the use of the tongue. For the second time we are reminded of the mystery and sacredness that attaches to the faculty of speech. Though the commandment formally prohibits perjury only on one particular occasion—that of giving testimony in a court of justice—it undoubtedly forbids every variety of falsehood. Truthfulness is an obligation which men owe to one another as being fellow-members of the human brotherhood. Deceitfulness in speech is in a real sense contrary to nature, not only because speech ought ideally to correspond to the thought and intention of the mind, but because it is contrary to the truth of the body that one member should deal falsely with another.¹ Thus in Exodus xxiii. 1 the Israelite is forbidden even to give currency to a groundless report, whether from thoughtlessness or malice.

But we have already seen that truthfulness is a part of reverence to Almighty God. It is the homage which we owe to the mystery of His indwelling presence. By *truth in the inward parts* and by truth in the utterance of the lips which corresponds to it, we are to reflect the simplicity

¹ Eph. iv. 25. Cp. Aquinas, *Summa* ii. ii^{ae}. 110. 3 concl. : 'Mendacium omne est ex genere suo malum et peccatum, cum contra naturam sit mentiri.'

of the divine nature. 'The tongues that have cried "Holy" do Thou dispose to speak truth,' is the prayer of an Eastern Liturgy.¹ 'In its explicit form,' says Dr. Martineau, 'this image of Moral Right no longer represents itself as a collective conscience of mankind, or as an abstract law and order, but *lives* in the will and personality of God. Were veracity commended to men only by social affection and pressure of opinion, it would rest within the limits of human relations, and cast no look beyond. Yet in all ages and nations it has sought the temples for shelter, and ratified the contracts of the market by the prayer at the shrine.'² Among the Jews the use of the oath was invariably regarded as a religious act. *Thou shalt fear Jehovah thy God: Him shalt thou serve and shalt swear by His Name.*³ We have pointed out in connexion with the third commandment that a solemn oath is an assertion of the truth as in the very presence of God; falsehood or perjury is an outrage done to His revealed Name. In the ninth commandment it seems that the claim of *human society* is the more prominent idea. Truth is regarded in the earlier precept as a duty of reverence to God; in the later as an obligation of charity; and this suggests the possibility that in certain cases truthfulness may have to yield to a higher duty, that of self-accommodation to the abnormal needs of (e.g.) children, or of the sick and insane. In such rare cases, speech is used as an instrument rather than as an end; and the use of deception which may be salutary in a particular instance, does not imply any love or habit of deceitfulness.⁴ Never-

¹ F. G. Brightman, *Liturgies East and West*, p. 300. Cp. Hermas, *Pastor*, mand. iii. ² *Types of Ethical Theory*, ii. 259.

³ Deut. vi. 13; cp. Lev. xix. 12.

⁴ See Newman Smyth, *Christian Ethics*, 395 foll.; or Dorner, *System of Christian Ethics*, § 66.

theless, such a use of speech contradicts its essential nature. St. Augustine well points out that in such cases of deception we do not praise the act itself, but at most the charitable intention which justifies deviation from the truth¹; and he reminds us of our Lord's words, *Let your speech be Yea, yea; Nay, nay; and whatsoever is more than these is of the evil one.*²

I

It does not seem necessary in this place to give particular examples of harmless deception or falsehood. Most works on moral theology contain discussions of the question whether every falsehood is a sin. It is usual with writers on the subject to classify falsehood according to the end aimed at, which in some instances may be actually serviceable or at least innocuous. Thomas Aquinas, for example, distinguishes between falsehoods that are injurious to another, and falsehoods that are intended either to confer a benefit, or merely to give pleasure; but it is noteworthy that he regards none of these different types of falsehood as wholly blameless. 'The injurious lie,' he concludes, 'is a mortal sin; the falsehood that is intended to be serviceable, or that is uttered in jest' (or 'by way of compliment') 'is a venial sin.'³ These distinctions, however, do not seem to cover what may be called the conventional phrases of politeness, commonly used in society; nor do they take account of cases in which it is absolutely necessary to withhold information (as when a Minister in Parliament is asked a question which in the public interest ought not to be

¹ *Enchiridion ad Laur.* xxii.

² Matt. v. 37.

³ *Summa Theologiae*, ii. ii^{ae}. 110. art. 4, concl.: 'Mendacium perniciosum, peccatum mortale est: officiosum vero ac jocosum venalia esse contingit.'

answered). Under this head would fall the obligation of secrecy imposed on the clergy by the ' seal of confession.' In all such cases, in which the duty of guarding a secret is paramount, falsehood or at least mental reservation may be very much the lesser of two evils. Silence under interrogation may involve the betrayal of a trust; on the other hand the open profession of ignorance is not intended primarily to deceive, but to withhold facts that can only be made public to the serious injury of another. At the same time one naturally hesitates to accept the statement confidently made by some Jesuit writers that our Lord occasionally availed Himself of this right of mental reservation¹; nor does it seem more possible to accept the view of some ancient theologians that in at least one instance (St. Mark xiii. 32) He ' pretended ' not to know the truth.² The fact is that Christian moralists cannot bring themselves to lay down principles on this matter, or to regulate, as it were, the duty of occasional lying. What seems to be obviously clear is that in proportion to the goodness of the speaker's *intention*, the guilt of falsehood diminishes; ³ in other words, that falsehood or simulation of any kind is an evil and contrary to nature, but may be justifiable in cases where the motive is simply desire to fulfil the law of charity. The fact that such cases now and then occur will of itself be a matter of sorrow to the Christian whose aim is ever to *walk in the light* as He Whom he serves *is in*

¹ Fr. Slater in *Principia Theologiae Moralis*, p. 469, gives the following instances: St. John ii. 19, vii. 8, xi. 11.

² Such is the comment of Cyril of Alexandria on the passage in question. See Dr. A. B. Bruce, *The Humiliation of Christ*, pp. 366 foll.

³ *Summa*, ii. ii^{ae}. 110. art. 2, resp.: ' Patet quod quanto bonum intentum est melius, tanto magis minuitur culpa mendacii.'

*the light.*¹ Like the necessity of taking an oath, they are the outcome of human frailty and sinfulness; they must needs occur only in a world which *lieth in the evil one.*²

II

The ground of the prohibition contained in the ninth commandment lies partly in the mental limitations, partly in the moral perversity, of average humanity. Men are prone to say what is false often as a consequence of their defective power of judgment. A great deal of unintentional perjury committed in courts of justice is due to this cause. Owing to an imperfect education, men can neither observe accurately nor describe correctly what they have heard and seen, and thus they give currency to statements which are in fact untrue. On the other hand, people are prone through pride or jealousy to detract from the reputation of others, or even actively to injure their good name. The motive implied in the original Hebrew precept may be even lower than this, for in its context the ninth commandment seems to prohibit that kind of false witness which is deliberately aimed at another's life or possessions. This is also suggested by a passage which looks like an expansion of the commandment (Lev. xix. 16), *Thou shalt not go up and down as a tale-bearer among thy people: neither shalt thou stand against the blood of thy neighbour.*³ The bearing of false witness is a common crime in the East, and in one historic instance, that of Naboth, was deliberately intended to have fatal consequences. Hence the strong expressions used in Proverbs xxv. 18: *A man that beareth false witness against his neighbour is a maul, and a sword, and a sharp arrow;* and the severe penalty for false witness which is prescribed in Deuteronomy xix. 18, 19.

¹ 1 John i. 7. ² 1 John v. 19. ³ Cp. Exod. xxiii. 1.

In modern times we have to take account of that tribunal of public opinion which is continually passing judgment upon the character and conduct of men, and to which every one, whether qualified to do so or not, to some extent contributes. The value of such public opinion varies according to the degree of knowledge and the moral sentiment that lies behind it. It is apt to be led astray in individual cases by ignorance of the facts necessary for forming a complete judgment, and in matters of morality it is unprogressive. It does not readily take account of special circumstances and altered conditions. It reflects the tone of average opinion, which is subservient to fashion in matters of conduct, impatient of singularity, and instinctively suspicious of anything that tends either to raise the prevalent standard of morality or to impugn established ideas and beliefs. When we consider the nature of the weapons with which men of marked individuality—prophets, reformers, teachers—have in all periods of history been assailed; when we take into account the way in which slander, misrepresentation, attacks on private life, imputation of base motives, etc., have been employed to thwart the ends of righteousness and the cause of truth, we understand the severity of many New Testament sayings in regard to the misuse of the tongue. We realize, for example, that St. Paul is justified in classing detraction, secret slander and the tendency to put an evil construction upon the conduct of another, among sins of active malignity and even of violence.¹ We recognize the essential truth of St. James' saying: *The tongue is a restless evil, full of deadly poison.*² For the misuse of speech does more than merely deteriorate the character by impairing the will-power of those who

¹ Rom. i. 29, 30: 'Full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, malignity, whisperers, backbiters.'

² Jas. iii. 8.

give way to it. It destroys the bond of mutual confidence and good-will which holds human society together. 'It destroys and perverts a certain equity of the utmost importance to society to be observed; namely, that praise and dispraise, a good or bad character, should always be bestowed according to desert.'¹ It is a significant fact that the prophet Zechariah, desiring to build up the restored nationality of Israel on a secure and lasting basis, enjoins his countrymen to cultivate the spirit of charity and of justice, the virtues and graces that ennoble civic life. He closes his fair picture of a renewed and prosperous Jerusalem, *the city of truth*, the peaceful dwelling-place of aged men and women, watching joyous children at their sport—with the comprehensive precept . . . *Speak ye every man the truth with his neighbour: execute the judgment of truth and peace in your gates, and let none of you imagine evil in your hearts against his neighbour; and love no false oath.*² The prophet would have the citizens of Jerusalem realize that mutual hatred, strife, unkindness and falsity at once wreck the prosperity of the commonwealth and thwart the *thoughts of peace* which Jehovah cherishes for His people. *Therefore love truth and peace.*

III

Following our usual method we may turn to the positive teaching of the ninth commandment. It seems to gather up the lessons which experience had taught in regard to the power of the tongue for good or evil. The 'Wisdom' literature of the Old Testament is full of warnings which in their purport anticipate the solemn utterances of Christ in St. Matthew xii. 34-37 and St. Luke vi. 45. Thus in

¹ Bp. Butler, *Sermons*, no. iv.: 'Upon the government of the tongue.'

² Zech. viii. 16, 17.

the Book of Proverbs (xii. 14 foll.) we find in the usual anti-thetic form descriptions of the havoc and misery wrought by the false tongue, and the 'health,' healing, comfort and enlightenment diffused by the speech of the righteous and the wise.¹ Our Lord Himself implies that the ideal use of speech is to reflect the singleness of character which marks His true disciples. The Gospel aims at producing a certain 'soundness' of the personality which enables it to act as an undivided whole, and to direct all its different faculties to the fulfilment of a single end. *Out of the abundance of the heart, He tells us, the mouth speaketh* (St. Matt. xii. 34). Speech is 'good' when it embodies the will and moral purpose of a sound nature. Such a use of the tongue serves to edify *as the need may be*.² It is an element which purifies and strengthens the corporate life of mankind. It is a fountain of grace and spiritual blessing. It knits closer the bonds of fellowship; it ministers to disease of body or mind; it keeps alive the spirit of kindness, cheerfulness and hope; and all this because speech is the out-flow of a nature which in so far as it is 'good,' brings with it an atmosphere of moral health. What, then, are the characteristics of that healthful speech which the New Testament enjoins? ³

(1) Sincerity. The natural use of speech is to reproduce the exact thought of the heart. St. Augustine defines falsehood simply as a statement uttered by the lips at variance with the purpose of the heart.⁴ As we have already noticed, St. Paul devotes much pains on a certain occasion to

¹ Prov. xii. 18: 'The tongue of the wise is health'; cp. xxxi. 26.

² Eph. iv. 29.

³ The words *ὑγιαίνω, ὑγιής*, used specially in reference to the substance of Christian teaching, are characteristic of the Pastoral Epistles.

⁴ *de mendacio*, iii.

clearing himself from a charge of insincerity : of not being a man of his word ; as if such a fault were peculiarly unworthy of a servant of Him Who is *Faithful and True*, and in Whom all the promises of God are fulfilled.¹ Truthfulness must be, in fact, a habit of mind and character before it can be a characteristic of speech. The single-minded man is free from all inward division of mind, all distraction of aim, all mixed motives. In everything that he does or says he is *himself*. As he acts with decision and directness, without haunting self-consciousness or the desire of display ; so he speaks without affectation, without any desire to conceal his real thoughts and purpose. In regard to the ordinary fictions of polite society, we have observed that they are excusable in so far as they are well understood to be the conventional language of courtesy.² They are pernicious when they spring from excessive eagerness to please, or from false pride, as when we assent to a proposition which we do not believe to be true, or desire to appear other than we are—wealthier, or better educated, or of higher social position than is actually the case.

(2) Candour in statement. One chief effect of the indwelling presence of Christ in the hearts of His disciples should be manifested in a great reverence for fact as fact. The advance of science, the wide diffusion of scientific knowledge, and the employment of exact methods in all departments of study, has taught us the priceless value of a patient devotion to facts, and of accuracy in the representation of them. Moreover, we have perhaps learned the import-

¹ See above, p. 101.

² ' Perhaps it has become conventional to understand the formula " Not at home " as meaning " I am prevented from receiving, but wish you to regard my refusal not as if I had repulsed you, but as if you had missed me." ' Dorner, *System of Christian Ethics*, § 66. 2.

ance of dispassionateness and readiness to admit new facts which conflict with opinions already formed. The late Mr. Darwin tells us that while collecting material for the *Origin of Species* he made it a rule, whenever a published fact, or new observation came across him, which was opposed to his general results, to make a memorandum of it without fail and at once; 'for I had found by experience,' he says, 'that such facts and thoughts were far more apt to escape from the memory than favourable ones.'¹ The importance of some such rule in study is obvious. In proportion as the standard of knowledge has been gradually raised, educated people have learned to expect lucidity and accuracy both in thought and language; candour in the statement of facts, and judgments that are fair and well-informed. Education, indeed, whether moral or intellectual, has as one main object the training of the judgment. As in the study of scientific facts, so in dealing with human nature and character, the capacity of forming just and equitable judgments needs to be diligently cultivated: a task which involves a real and arduous self-discipline and a resolute desire to ascertain the exact truth. One very common offence against the ninth commandment is the habit of exaggeration, or as it has been called, the practice of using 'superlative speech' on trivial occasions. It is a habit which not only does wrong to language regarded as the highly finished and slowly developed instrument of thought; it inevitably tends to undermine truthfulness of character. Indeed, since it is usually associated with moral failings—vanity, boastfulness, querulousness, or

¹ *Life*, vol. i, p. 87. Cp. Bacon's remark in the *Novum Organon*, i. 46: 'Is humano intellectui error est proprius et perpetuus, ut magis moveatur et excitetur affirmativis quam negativis: cum rite et ordine aequum se utrique praeberere debeat.'

indifference to truth—it is a much graver and more insidious fault than is generally recognized. But in passing judgment upon the character or doings of other people, fidelity to fact is all-important. In this case recklessness or careless repetition of hearsay evidence may do irreparable injury to another's peace of mind or influence for good. It is well to remember Bishop Butler's warning that offences against the ninth commandment originate most frequently in mere talkativeness, 'a disposition to be talking, abstracted from the consideration of what is to be said'; in other words, in the unbridled use of the tongue without the sense of moral accountability for our words.

It is true, of course, that exactness in the use of speech depends to a great extent on training and education. But even more depends on habitual modesty and self-restraint. Most of us have a very imperfect knowledge of more than at most one or two subjects; consequently we ought to cultivate a much deeper sense of our own ignorance than we usually do. All subjects of human knowledge—all topics upon which men dispute—are complex and difficult, and can only be profitably discussed by those who have some sense of the many-sidedness of truth. But when we consider how little any one knows of the deep things of human nature—we shall feel it to be a kind of profanation to confidently impute motives, or to condemn the actions of others. Many of our statements about other people are the result of mere inference; and in criticizing their conduct or character, we are apt to mistake mere surmises and suppositions for real knowledge of facts.

(3) Charity. The New Testament enjoins us to *spea*
*truth in love*¹; not to take account of evil; not to rejoice
in unrighteousness but to rejoice *with the truth*.² It is a

¹ Eph. iv. 15.

² 1 Cor. xiii. 5, 6.

part of Christian charity to propagate the best report about other people that is honestly possible, and in any case to take no pleasure in needlessly repeating anything, however true in fact, which detracts from their character, or brings their failings to light. Human society of course constitutes a tribunal in which the process of judgment is continually going on, and no one can escape from its legitimate verdicts. But a Christian will not merely take pains to refrain from prejudicing this tribunal by false witness. He will follow actively after the things that make for peace. Like St. Barnabas, he will strive to bring men into relationships of kindness with each other. He will be habitually merciful in his judgments; he will try to remove misunderstandings; he will be tender to ignorance and weakness; he will make large allowance for that poverty of character which is so often the result of defective education or misfortune. 'Take care,' says St. Bernard, 'not to be either a curious investigator of the behaviour of others, nor a rash judge. Even if you discover something that has been done amiss, do not promptly *judge* your neighbour, but rather excuse him. Excuse his intention, though you cannot excuse his conduct; impute it to ignorance, or deception, or a sudden lapse. Say to yourself, "The temptation was too strong for him; what might it not have wrought in my own case, had it assailed me with equal violence!"' ¹ This seems to be one aspect of St. Peter's maxim (quoted perhaps from the Book of Proverbs), *Love covereth a multitude of sins*.² The merciful heart cannot indeed make light of sin or conceal its essential character, but it is full of compassion for the sinner, and by reticence

¹ *in Cant.* xl. 5. Cp. the saying ascribed to Hillel: 'Judge not thy neighbour till thou come into his place.'

² 1 Pet. iv. 8; cp. Prov. x. 12.

as much as by forgiveness 'covers' the offence—refrains from needless exposure of it or excessive condemnation.

(4) Trustworthiness and fidelity. We are apt to forget that we inflict a serious wrong on our neighbour if we either fail to keep engagements and promises, or if we betray their confidence. *He that goeth about as a tale-bearer revealeth secrets: but he that is of a faithful spirit concealeth a matter.* Fidelity even in small matters holds a very high place in the ethics of the New Testament. Man is called to imitate in his words and works the constancy and faithfulness of the divine character: not saying more than he means, nor promising what he is unable to perform; employing speech as the instrument of a good will and a generous heart; refraining from all pretence of being what he is not, or knowing what he knows not; manifesting in utterance as well as in conduct that moral and spiritual purpose which is the salt of life; above all, remembering that for every idle word he must give account in the day of judgment,² and that those only who are merciful in speech as well as in behaviour shall obtain mercy.³

¹ Prov. xi. 13; cp. xx. 19.

² Greg. *De past. cura*, iii. 14 s. fin.: 'Otiosum quippe verbum est, quod aut ratione justae necessitatis, aut intentione piaе utilitatis caret.'

³ See Jas. ii. 12, 13.

X

'Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife, nor his manservant, nor his maid-servant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor anything that is thy neighbour's.'

CHAPTER XII

THE TENTH COMMANDMENT

IN its form the tenth commandment is very primitive. It bears the mark of belonging to the pastoral age in the nature of the possessions specified.¹ The opening chapter of the Book of Job illustrates the way in which such possessions might incite lawless men to violent and hostile attacks on property. But to any one who studies the history of man's spiritual progress this will appear to be the most comprehensive of all the Mosaic precepts: that which stands out most prominently above the general level of the Hebrew legislation. In some sense it may be regarded as *the first and great* commandment of the Decalogue, inasmuch as it aims at regulating desire, which, when unrestrained, is the principle of human sin; when rightly directed, is love—*the fulfilling of the law*.

The precept thus touches the very root of all the offences in word or deed which are prohibited in the first nine commandments. As St. James points out in his profound analysis of sin, sin is the offspring of desire (*ἐπιθυμία*); and the moral life consists in a progressive restraint, education and consecration of desire. Love means desire sanctified and directed aright. Indeed, the true Christian's entire life may be described as aspiration—holy desire.

¹ We have already observed that the precept seems to have originally ended with the word 'house,' the rest being added by way of expansion. Cp. Job i. 15, 17.

Tota vita Christiani boni sanctum desiderium est, says St. Augustine.¹ The Christian is one who desires much, expects much, hopes for much ; for he sets before himself nothing less than the attainment of the divine promises, the fulfilment in him of the divine purpose. His life-long prayer is that he may be *filled unto all the fulness of God*.² He is in short 'a man of desires' (*vir desideriorum*).³ A continual desire, an ardent thirst for the living God—is the very soul of religion ; it constitutes the motive power of active morality ; it is the raw material, so to speak, out of which the habit of virtue is formed :—

' For giving me *desire*,
An eager thirst, a burning ardent fire,
A virgin infant flame,
A love with which into the world I came,
An inward hidden heavenly love
Which in my soul did work and move,
And ever, ever me inflame
With restless longing, heavenly avarice,
That never could be satisfied,
That did incessantly a Paradise
Unknown suggest, and something undescried
Discern, and bear me to it ; be
Thy Name for ever praised by me !⁴

If the one all-sufficient object of man's desire is God, covetousness means the misdirection of desire ; desire seeking apart from God, that is in created objects, the satisfaction for which it longs. The tenth commandment

¹ Aug. *in ep. Joan. ad Parth* [1 John] iv. 6.

² Eph. iii. 19.

³ Dan. x. 11, Vulg.

⁴ T. Traherne (d. 1674), ' Desire ' in *Poetical Works*. Cp. the close of Bp. Ken's exposition of the Tenth Commandment in *The Practice of Divine Love* : ' Forgive me, O my God, if I am unmeasurably ambitious, it is only of Thy favour ; forgive me, if I am unsatiably covetous, it is only of Thy fruition ; forgive me, if I am perpetually discontented, it is only because I cannot love Thee more.'

suggests two forms which covetousness may assume: the desire of unlawful pleasure, or the desire of unlawful possession; and this seems to explain the frequent association in St. Paul's epistles of greed or covetousness with sins of the flesh.¹ The word 'covetousness' has, in fact, a very wide sense. As in the Old Testament it appears to include acts of violence and rapacity, oppression of debtors or of the poor, acceptance of bribes to pervert justice, making unjust gain out of a neighbour's necessities, etc.; so in the New Testament it implies the restless desire of the creature to satisfy its varied cravings with something other and lower than God, forgetful that

'God alone can satisfy whom God alone created.'

The Decalogue, then, 'closes the list of sins with one which begets them all'; and this circumstance has a certain doctrinal as well as an ethical significance.

1. In the first place the tenth commandment enforces and illustrates the seemingly paradoxical assertion of St. Paul that *the law is spiritual*.² It played, as we may remember, a conspicuous part in the Apostle's own spiritual history. It broke down the barriers of confidence and self-sufficiency that withheld him from self-surrender to Christ. It brought home to him the illimitable range of the Law's demand; it taught him the 'inwardness' of morality, showing him that the moral life consists not in outward action but in disposition; not in conformity to a rule or standard of external behaviour, but in the mortification of desire and the consecration of thought and impulse to God. The single precept *Thou shalt not covet* (or *lust*) revealed to his soul its inherent weakness and corruption; it awakened

¹ Cp. page 173 above, and see Trench, *Synonyms of the New Testament*, § xxiv.

² Rom. vii. 14.

his conscience ; it drove him in self-despair to the feet of the Saviour Whom he had persecuted. This is indeed the glory of the commandment, that it anticipates the higher righteousness of the Sermon on the Mount ; it introduces that view of sin and its opposite which is a necessary element in any religion that claims to be spiritual and therefore universal, namely, that sin is not a quality of acts or things, but an attitude of the heart or will ; that the standard by which conduct is to be judged is not that of outward consequences, personal or social, but that of inward motive and intention ; that righteousness is the fulfilment of a personal relationship, devotion of heart and life to *the invisible God*. ' Our religion,' writes Lactantius, ' is for this reason permanent and immutable, that it regards the inward disposition itself as a sacrifice ; it depends wholly on the intention of the worshipper.' ¹ St. Paul himself is the great exponent of the doctrine that practical Christianity consists in a life perpetually directed Godwards : a life of which the ruling principle is the recollection of God's presence and the single-hearted intention of pleasing Him, *by bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ*.² So, again, the very truth and inward reality of sacrifice consists in man's dedication and devotion of his whole personality—his will and spirit, his heart and mind—to God.³

2. On the other hand, in thus enlarging and deepening man's idea of the nature and guilt of sin, the commandment

¹ Lact. *inst.* v. 19. Cp. Aug. *in ep. Jo. ad Parth.*, vii. 7 : ' Videtis quia non *quid faciat* homo considerandum est, sed *quo animo et voluntate faciat*.'

² 2 Cor. x. 5. For the phrase ἀρέσκειν τῷ θεῷ see Rom. viii. 8, 1 Cor. vii. 32, 1 Thess. ii. 4, 15, iv. 1 ; 2 Tim. ii. 4. Cp. Col. i. 10.

³ Augustine, *de civ. Dei*, x. 6 : ' Ipse homo Dei nomini consecratus et Deo votus, inquantum mundo moritur ut Deo vivat, sacrificium est.'

brings home to him his inability to fulfil the righteousness of the law in his own strength. It reveals to him the fearful strength of the enemy with which he has to contend. In one of its aspects sin is merely self-love. On a large scale we see its nature and consequences visibly manifested in the actual condition of the world. *Wars and fightings* between nations or classes of men, like quarrels between individuals, are the outcome of desire, restlessly seeking gratification yet never satisfied. As St. James (iv. 1 foll.) points out, while social disorders of every kind have their root in the blind self-seeking of individuals, all this vain striving issues only in disillusionment and hopelessness. *Ye lust and have not ; ye kill and covet and cannot obtain ; ye fight and war ; ye have not because ye ask not. Ye ask and receive not because ye ask amiss, that ye may spend it on your pleasures.* It is self-love which underlies those 'long-range' sins (as they have been called) which are characteristic of modern civilization: that apathy and callousness, for instance, which disclaims all personal responsibility and concern for the condition of the toiling poor; that non-moral use of wealth of which gambling in its multitudinous forms is a typical example. The tenth commandment aims its dart 'at the head of a lie.' It excludes the love of self, which seeks its own regardless of its neighbour's good, which ignores and in so doing loosens the very bond by which society is held together. Self-love—here is the root of all that makes modern civilization a travesty of Christ's teaching. St. Paul directly connects the precept, *Look not every man on his own things, but every man on the things of others*, with the central doctrine of Christianity, the doctrine of the Cross.¹ The Cross means a death to self, the utter abnegation of self, the triumph of that supreme law which

¹ Phil. ii. 4 foll.

the sin of the world contravenes—the law of love. Only in so far as they are *crucified with Christ*, only in proportion as they are filled with the very spirit of the Crucified and share His mind, can men overcome the passionate impulses which lead them to ignore or destroy the happiness of others. Thus by the pressure of the precept which serves only to manifest the strength of sin, the ruinous effects of self-love, they are driven to find refuge in Him Who alone can heal desire and transform it into a fountain of blessing and health to mankind.¹ We are called to a height of perfection which we cannot attain by our unassisted natural powers. Spiritual victory in the region of desire and impulse, thought and imagination, can only be won by the grace of the indwelling Spirit, in Whose coming Christ comes and manifests in man the Christ-life, the life which love has purified and transfigured into God-likeness.

I

We naturally think of the commandment, first, as enjoining the restriction of desire. It encourages us to dwell in thought on what may be called the negative, as well as the positive, benevolence of Almighty God. What we have not, we have not in accordance with His will. Some people allow themselves to be miserable and restless because of their want of gifts, physical, social, intellectual. They wish not to be better, but to be better off, than they are. Hence arise *envy*, unwillingness to think or speak well of those who are wealthier or more gifted or more fortunate than ourselves; and *discontent*—a sense of dissatisfaction—

¹ Aug. *epist. xcvi. ad Asellicum*: 'Haec est utilitas legis, quia ostendit hominem sibi ut sciat infirmitatem suam, et videat quemadmodum per prohibitionem augeatur potius carnalis concupiscentia quam sanetur.'

passing over too readily into a kind of resentment against the order of God's providence. The tenth commandment plainly preaches contentment. We are to accept the circumstances and conditions of our life as God's present will for us ; to check day-dreams ; to repress *the wandering of the desire*.¹ In things *as they are* we are to find our opportunities of conquest and of service. We are to control circumstances, and make them minister to our moral and spiritual enrichment. Bishop Wilson wisely says in his *Sacra Privata*, ' Though I suffer, yet I am well, because I am what God would have me to be ' ; and elsewhere he lays down for those who seek ' the way of an happy life ' the following rule : ' Lay nothing too much to heart ; desire nothing too eagerly ; rejoice not excessively, nor grieve too much for disasters ; be not violently bent on any design ; nor let any worldly cares hinder you from taking care of your own soul.' Our great aim should be to become all that we, with our special opportunities and gifts, are capable of becoming. So of a noble woman it is related by her biographer that ' she was always anxious to become all she could be rather than to do great things.'² The real task of life is to discover what manner of men and women God would have us be ; to seek not to fulfil any self-chosen ideal of life, but to ask continually, *Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do ?* '³ We may be sure that Almighty God has given us, and will give us in the future, all that we really need for the accomplishment of that one supreme purpose of life. When St. Paul speaks of *godliness with contentment*, he evidently contrasts it with the temper of those who *desire to be rich*, and who thereby involve themselves in cares and

¹ Eccles. vi. 9.

² *A Record of Ellen Watson* (1856-1880), by A. Buckland, p. 17.

³ Acts ix. 6.

sorrows, in *foolish and hurtful lusts*, which destroy peace of mind and are ruinous to character.¹ For experience shows that the persistent pursuit of wealth is fatal to the development of a man's higher self; it quenches spiritual aspirations; it sears the conscience; it robs the soul of moral freedom; it impairs the social instincts—mercy, compassion, humanity. It undermines at once a man's sense of dependence on his fellows, and his feeling of responsibility towards them.²

Contentment is one lesson of the commandment, and another is unworldliness. *A man's life*, we know, *consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth*.³ Not only the teachings of Scripture, but the very circumstances of our time, warn us to be men of few wants; simple in our habits of life, and seeking only for that degree of wealth which will render us efficient in the work of our calling. One of the great objects which men of good will should set before themselves at the present time is the endeavour to lessen the inequality that prevails between different standards of comfort—the highest and the lowest. 'It is a clear duty,' says a recent writer on Ethics, 'on the part of every one who is convinced that the share of good things enjoyed by the few is disproportionate and intrinsically unjust, to seek to limit his own personal expenditure wherever he can do so without a less efficient discharge of his own social function or other social inconvenience.'⁴

Once more the commandment teaches unselfishness. No one who takes due account of the whole condition of

¹ 1 Tim. vi. 6–10.

² Cp. *Christianity and the Social Crisis*, by W. Rauschenbusch, p. 74 f. (a powerful and striking survey of present social conditions in England and America).

³ Luke xii. 15.

⁴ H. Rashdall, *The Theory of Good and Evil*, vol. i., p. 272.

the world, who considers the infinite needs of humanity—the evils and sorrows that lack assuagement, the poverty of every description—mental, spiritual, material—that claims relief, will feel inclined to seek great things for himself, or to waste his energies in heaping up riches and surrounding himself with comforts. On the contrary, he will endeavour to take his full share of the burden of responsibility which rests upon society as a whole for the present state of things. The question of the Hebrew prophet will continually ring in his ears: *Is it a time to receive money, and to receive garments, and olive-yards and vine-yards, and sheep, and oxen, and menservants and maidservants?*¹ The call to our age is not to accumulate wealth indefinitely, but rather to employ and distribute it wisely and equitably. It is related of an honoured merchant who rose to high eminence in Liverpool not many years ago that ‘He recognized the principle that in going into business God has the first claim on the profits. When he had acquired a certain amount of capital which he considered adequate to his business obligations, some years before his death, he came to the conclusion to allow no further accumulation, but to spend all that he got, as God prospered him, for the promotion of Christian enterprise and social reforms.’ Of the same good man we are told that in his case the difficulty was ‘not to get him to treat others as he treated himself, but to get him to treat himself as he treated others.’²

In this instance at least the Christian interpretation of the commandment *Thou shalt not covet* was discovered in the Gospel precept, *Let no man seek his own but every man another's wealth.*³

¹ 2 Kings v. 27.

² See Dr. R. F. Horton, *This Do*, pp. 7 foll.

³ 1 Cor. x. 24; cp. xiii. 5.

II

The other aspect of the commandment is positive. It inculcates the right direction and the complete consecration of desire. It gives us an answer to the question propounded in the famous tenth Satire of Juvenal, a question suggested by the moral and religious conditions of an age and state of society which presents, as we are often reminded, startling parallels to our own. The late Bishop Creighton shortly before his death is said to have observed, 'I have no doubt what is the greatest danger of the twentieth century: it is the absence of high aspirations'; and more recently a similar remark has been made by the author of that able but disquieting book *The Condition of England*,—the remark that modern life as a whole is destitute of what he calls 'ideal inner springs.' Indeed, we seem in much recent literature to overhear an echo of Juvenal's complaint that most men pass through life aimlessly, knowing neither what to pursue nor what to avoid. What, asks the Satirist, is to be the purport of their prayers? What shall they desire of the gods? and his poem culminates in a typical prayer of Stoic piety:—

'O Thou who know'st the wants of human kind,
Vouchsafe me health of body, health of mind;
A soul prepared to meet the frowns of fate
And look undaunted on a future state;
That reckons death a blessing, yet can bear
Existence nobly with its weight of care;
That anger and desire alike restrains,
And counts Alcides' toils and cruel pains
Superior far to banquets, wanton nights,
And all the Assyrian monarch's soft delights.'¹

In dealing with the Decalogue as a 'rule of life and love,' we may assume that it answers this fundamental question,

¹ Juv. *Sat.* x. 355 foll. (boldly translated by W. Gifford).

What ought we to desire and aim at? What should be *the thing that we long for*? What the supreme object of prayer?

Here we shall not forget that the teaching of the first commandment suggests the true answer. The end of our being is the possession of God; the crown of desire and aspiration is Himself. As St. Augustine says in a fine sentence near the close of his greatest work: 'He Himself will be the reward of virtue who has imparted virtue, and has promised to bestow upon us Himself, the greatest and best of all things. . . . He Himself is the end of our desires; He Who shall be seen without end, loved without satiety, praised without weariness.' ¹

1. *Ipse finis erit desideriorum nostrorum.* If religion consists in the knowledge of God, the true life of man, the final end of his endeavours, must be the discovery and fulfilment of His will. We have to consider this all-disposing Will in relation to our own character, our vocation and work in life, the special circumstances of our time. To the yearning of desire corresponds the temper of expectancy. Fixing his heart on one supreme object, the Christian will continually look for tokens of the divine purpose, indications of the path he must follow, of the work he is called to do. And the surest way to discover the divine will for us is to fulfil the task that immediately confronts us trustfully, thoroughly, prayerfully; not asking to see 'the distant scene,' but confident that each step on our way is ordered by a Wisdom which perfectly knows the direction and the goal of our pilgrimage. One certain sign of vocation is willingness to submit cheerfully to the discipline of present circumstances, realizing that the truth of God's providence gives meaning and dignity even to the most trivial tasks and incidents of daily life.

¹ *de civitate Dei*, xxii. 30.

But beyond the thought of God's will for the individual soul, its growth in grace, its fulfilment of its appointed mission, its sanctification through work and suffering, lies the purpose of that will respecting the world at large. The present order of things, political, social, religious ; the expansion of knowledge ; the signs of the times ; the needs of the age—all these have to be studied in the light of God's revealed will ; all the problems they suggest have to be solved in dependence upon the divine guidance which reaches us through the illumination of conscience, the progress of science, the teachings of history and experience. We are called to apply to the special circumstances of our age the great principles of ethics enshrined in the Decalogue and expanded by the Gospel of Christ.

Each precept proclaims the truth that virtue is not so much a possession of the individual soul as a social force of indefinite magnitude ; that *no man liveth to himself*, but that all his habits, ways and works have a direct bearing upon the well-being of others. The character which Christianity aims at producing is social ; it stands related to the needs and claims of a body ; and the will of God which the individual embraces and obeys, has as its end and scope the regeneration of society. The kingdom of God ' comes ' in proportion as that will is fulfilled by individuals ; but the coming of the kingdom is the law of all progress, and the crown of all hope, for mankind at large. Our Lord plainly accepts this Himself as the guiding principle of the incarnate life, and claims spiritual kinship with all who follow His example : *My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me and to finish His work. Whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is My brother, and sister, and mother.*¹ But He teaches His followers to look beyond the present to a

¹ John iv. 34 ; Mark. iii. 35.

time when, in a redeemed humanity, in a new heaven and earth, God shall manifest the end of all His ways and the eternal purpose of His will.

2. Next, and as a part of the will of God, we are called to seek the perfection of our own nature ; we may rightly desire to be the very best that we have it in us to become. It is this ' self,' this personality of ours, which God deigns to use in the furtherance of His purpose and in the extension of His kingdom. For the end of discipline, of restriction of desire (' Thou shalt not '), of self-denial, is not the *repression* of nature, but its *liberation* from all that hinders or mars its perfect development. The characteristic gift of the Gospel is *life* ; the divine Spirit is the Spirit of power because He is also the Spirit of discipline. Man realizes his highest capacities, he attains to spiritual power, by concentrating his energies on what is best worth seeking, and by sacrificing the lower to the higher elements in his nature. We are not to ' lay waste our powers ' in seeking the lower good when we are capable of ' having ' the living God Himself as *the strength of our heart and our portion for ever*. Here is the motive we need for using aright present opportunities, and for doing all that we do *as unto the Lord* : glorifying God in the activities of a disciplined body, the energies of a carefully trained mind, the devotion of a will which has found in the will of God its freedom and its peace.¹

3. We have noticed the fact that in the English liturgy the short petition which follows the last of the commandments was probably suggested by a collect contained in the service-book used by the Protestant refugees from Strasburg, and published in Latin by Valerand Pullain (1551).²

¹ E la sua volontate è nostra pace. Dante, *Paradiso*, Cant. 3. 85.

² ' Domine Deus, Pater misericors, qui hoc decalogo per servum tuum Mosem nos Legis tue justitiam docuisti ; *dignare cordibus*

The language of this prayer refers, of course, to the words of St. Paul in 2 Corinthians iii. 3, commenting upon which Augustine explains that the law of God written on the heart signifies simply 'the presence of the Holy Spirit, the finger of God, by Whose presence love is shed abroad in our hearts : love which is the fulfilling of the law and the end of the commandment.' ¹ 'The Law,' then, as the same great writer points out, 'was given that grace might be sought for ; and grace was bestowed that the Law might be fulfilled.' ² Thus the crowning object of Christian desire is the presence of God in the heart : the indwelling of the divine Spirit as the living Source of holiness, enlightenment and power. To be filled with the Spirit is the destiny to which man is called, and of which he is capable, in Christ. The Spirit makes known the will and manifold wisdom of God ; He takes of the things of Christ and reveals them to the Church. He lifts human nature to its highest level ; He enables man to become his best, his noblest self. The true liberty of man's will is realized 'exactly in proportion as he is in Christ, and the Spirit of Christ in him. . . . In its perfectness it is the self become another. It is Christ in the man. It is the man become one Spirit with Christ.' ³ The Law of God written in the heart of man : this is the predestined consummation of Christ's redemptive work. It is the goal of man's spiritual progress. Thus does he *enter into life*, since the Holy One Who dwells within him is Love and the Source of Love : bestowed by the Eternal Father upon His children that they may find the fulfilment of His

nostris eam ita tuo Spiritu inscribere, ut nequicquam deinceps in vita magis optemus aut velimus quam tibi obedientia consummata placere in omnibus, per Jesum Christum Filium tuum.' Cp. p. 44.

¹ Aug., *de spiritu et litera*, xxxvi.

² *Ibid.* xxxiv.

³ R. C. Moberly, *Atonement and Personality*, 227.

commandments not a burden but a delight ; not bondage but liberty ; not the task work of slaves but the glad service of sons.¹

III

We may fittingly close our study of the Decalogue by briefly dwelling once more, even at the risk of some repetition, on the manner in which the Lord Jesus Christ Himself ' fulfilled ' the righteousness of the Law.

1. First, He fulfilled it in His own person as ' the great Prophet of love.' ²

The Law had two aspects : as a ceremonial system it was designed to educate and to satisfy man's sense of sin and spiritual need. As a law of righteousness, it was calculated to develop in man such self-despair as should drive him to seek from God the moral strength which he needed in order to comply with the Law's demand. Both these aspects of the Law found their counterpart and fulfilment in Christ. He exhibited in His own life of obedience, and in the death which crowned it, the essential nature of the sacrifice which the divine righteousness required, namely, the self-oblation of a devoted and obedient will. Further, Christ's teaching showed that the Mosaic precepts relating to purification, and the distinctions between clean and unclean, etc., were intended not only to impress upon the Jew the sanctity of all life, but also to suggest, by enactments dealing merely with physical facts and conditions, distinctions that were

¹ Aug., *de catechisandis rudibus*, xxiii. 41 : ' Misit eis Spiritum Sanctum per quem diffusa caritate in cordibus eorum, non solum sine onere sed etiam cum jucunditate legem possent implere.'

² Bp. Ken, *The Practice of Divine Love*, part 3, init.

moral and spiritual. The ceremonial directions of the levitical code were based on the idea that holiness was a thing external and physical, namely, 'separation' from anything that might cause legal defilement. The new law of Christ proclaimed that holiness consisted in the hallowing of man's entire nature, the consecration to God of thought, impulse, desire and conduct alike.

On the other hand, Jesus Christ fulfilled the law of moral obedience, in that he exhibited in His own perfect life that type of character which the Law was intended, but hitherto had failed, to produce; the character of the loving and devoted 'servant of Jehovah.' He visibly manifested in word and action the righteousness towards which the discipline of the ancient Covenant pointed and tended from the first: that spirit or temper to which the Old Testament saints had, at the best, only partially attained. Christ 'fulfilled' the Law in a sense far deeper and more comprehensive than even Israel's holiest could anticipate when He summed up the whole duty of man in the twofold precept of love, and furnished as it were a divine commentary upon it in His life: in His filial devotion to God, in His hostility to evil, in His tenderness to the outcast and the sinful, in His fellow-feeling for sufferers, in the completeness of His self-sacrifice. He is, then, Himself the true expositor of the Law, imparting to the law of love that infinite extension which is implied in the culminating precept: *Be ye perfect even as your Father Which is in heaven is perfect.* His life on earth was the manifestation of love in its perfect fulfilment of all possible relationships. In Him we behold love finding its perfect joy and satisfaction in God, and thus fulfilling 'the great and first' commandment; love worshipping the Father *in spirit and in truth* (II); love manifesting and glorifying on earth the Name of God (III); love ex-

hibiting the perfect interdependence of work and prayer (IV) ; love submitting to *every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake* by subjection to earthly parents and to constituted authority (V) ; love *doing good*, ever toiling for ' the preservation, restoration and exaltation of life ' ¹ (VI) ; love representing in a stainless human body the perpetual triumph of the spirit over the flesh (VII) ; love rendering to *all their dues* (VIII), thinking and speaking no evil (IX), and finding in the service of God the fulfilment of all desire, the crown of every aspiration (X).

Thus He teaches us that the moral law of God not only confronts and challenges man's conscience as an external positive precept, but that it claims his allegiance as the necessary rule of perfection, the true *law of the mind*, for a being formed in the image of God and as such called to embrace *the good and acceptable and perfect will* of the All-holy and All-merciful.²

Christ then fulfils the Law, manifests the inner spirit and meaning of the Decalogue, in His life of love. He shows that love is the law of the divine kingdom at each stage of its manifestation on earth ; that through love man fulfils his part in that eternal spiritual order which embraces all created being and of which God Himself is Lord and King because *He is love, and he that abideth in love abideth in God, and God abideth in him*.³ He implies that in regard to both the negative and positive duties implied in each commandment love is the sure and only guide : love in its instinctive hatred of evil and its delight in good, its ' tenderness to please and its fearfulness to offend ' ⁴ ; love habitually approving

¹ This is the definition of ' salvation ' given by the late Dr. Hort in *The Way, the Truth and the Life* (Hulsean Lectures), p. 101.

² Rom. vii. 23 ; xii. 2.

³ 1 John iv. 16.

⁴ Bp. Ken.

*the things that are excellent and buying up the opportunity*¹ as occasion requires. *Ama et fac quod vis.*

2. On the other hand Christ also fulfils the moral law in us as the Author of Redemption. The discipline of life under the old Covenant led man to realize the enslavement of his will. It compelled him to look beyond himself for power to fulfil what he recognized to be the essential law of his nature as a spiritual being. In His re-enactment and exposition of the moral law, Jesus Christ seems to respond to man's sense of failure and weakness. He reveals at once the *meaning* of the law's authority and the *power* by which alone the will of God can be accomplished. He shows that the Law speaks with authority because it is the appeal of Person to person. He Who says *Be ye holy for I am holy* has manifested Himself in history as the gracious Redeemer of His people, Who calls them to be like Himself, and Who in the Incarnation and Passion of His Son reveals Himself as being 'on our side' in our conflict with the sin and evil of the world.² An authority which is moral and personal finds its echo and response in the human heart, since it presents itself to man as the requirement of his own conscience, as the demand of his own spiritual nature for satisfaction and perfection. Again, the Law emanates from One Who is a God of grace, freely bestowing that filial Spirit of love and of power which alone can enlist the affections and re-enforce the will of man. Thus the commandment which human weakness found to be *unto death*³ is transformed

¹ See Phil. i. 10, Eph. v. 16, marg. (R.V.).

² Forbes Robinson's *Letters to his friends*, p. 193. 'I like to read how Jesus went about healing all manner of diseases and all manner of sickness and bringing life and strength wherever He came, showing us that Heaven is on our side in our wrestle with all that deforms and degrades human nature.'

³ Rom. vii. 10.

into a rule of life and love. He who proclaims that life in God is the true destiny of man, is Himself the Author and Giver of this Life; Himself deigns through the operation of His Spirit to become unto His brethren and within them *wisdom from God and righteousness and sanctification*.¹

When we ponder this mystery of divine lovingkindness, we seem to understand why it was that the great discourse, in which the Lord Jesus promulgated the Law of His kingdom and expounded the inner meaning of the Decalogue, was pronounced upon the Mount of the Beatitudes. 'With God,' says Irenaeus, 'nothing is meaningless or without significance.'² We are surely intended to learn that the life of obedience to the commandments of God is identical with the life of true blessedness; that in fulfilling them man attains his true end, fellowship with the All-holy.

The same thought indeed seems to be already suggested in the Psalter, more particularly in that psalm which has been called pre-eminently 'the Psalm of the Law,' 'the workday Psalm of the Church.' The cxixth Psalm seems to be the mature spiritual fruit of the captivity in Babylon: that prolonged, severe and monotonous discipline which was to Israel the means of a real spiritual education, the occasion of a great spiritual advance. In Babylon Israel learned to be independent of all sensible tokens of Jehovah's presence in the midst of His people. It rose to a more profound conception of the divine nature. It learned that God was spirit and that the worship which He could accept must be wholly spiritual. The Law written of old on tables of stone now became through suffering engraved upon the hearts of devout Israelites. The nation renewed its youth;

¹ 1 Cor. i. 30.

² Iren., *adv. haer.*, iv. 21: 'Nihil enim vacuum neque sine sign apud Deum.'

it returned in a sense to its first love. In *the wilderness of the peoples* Jehovah spake comfortably to His erring children, *I am a father to Israel and Ephraim is My firstborn.*¹ Further, the effect of the exile was to bring abruptly to an end that ceremonial system which had hitherto been regarded as the indispensable condition of covenant-union with God. In Babylon sacrificial worship was impossible, and the only means of keeping alive the religious tradition of the nation was a strict observance of such customs—circumcision, observance of the Sabbath, stated fasts, distinctions of clean and unclean meats, lustrations and common prayer—as could be practised without interference on foreign soil. The question forced itself upon Israel's consciousness whether after all the worship of sacrifices really corresponded to Jehovah's original requirement. The teaching of the prophets bore at length its tardy fruit, and the judgment which had overwhelmed the nation was seen to be the penalty of unfaithfulness to the moral law and of forgetfulness that the Decalogue was the true link that united man to his Creator. Thus was awakened the life of religious affection and aspiration—the life which in due time, after the restoration of the Jews to their own land, found tender and passionate expression in the Psalter. The cxixth Psalm, beyond all others, perhaps, testifies that the revival of the sacrificial worship and the discipline of the levitical law in post-exilic times, completed the work of grace which the period of the captivity had begun ; and so far from quenching the newly-awakened life of emotion rather purified and deepened it. The Psalm reflects the yearnings and strivings of a spirit which has realized in its time of trouble and desolation that God Himself is its life and its light, and that only in fellowship with Him can it find blessedness and peace.

¹ Jer. xxxi. 9.

*Blessed are those that are undefiled in the way :
and walk in the law of the Lord.
Blessed are they that keep His testimonies :
and seek Him with their whole heart.*

Do we not hear the echo of this heartfelt confession in the opening words of the Sermon on the Mount ?

With an infinitely higher and deeper consciousness of all that is involved in the keeping of God's commandments, the Son of Man describes the true blessedness in words which do but expand the utterance of the Psalmist. The beatitude of the soul consists in that spirit of unbroken dependence on God which is at once the divinely-intended fruit of the Decalogue and the secret of its fulfilment. The blessedness of those *who walk in the law of the Lord* and who *seek Him with their whole heart* is the blessedness of *the poor in spirit* to whom belongs *the kingdom of heaven* : of *the pure in heart* who *shall see God*.

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